

The Foreman

of the
JA6



E. JOY JOHNSON

THE FOREMAN OF
THE JA6

THE FOREMAN OF
THE JA6

A NOVEL

BY
E. JOY JOHNSON

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THE JA6

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TO
THE PEOPLE OF THE WEST
AMONG WHOM I HAVE SPENT THE BEST
YEARS OF MY LIFE, THAN WHOM
THERE IS NONE BETTER, A PEOPLE
WHOSE FRIENDSHIP IS GENUINE,
WHOSE LOVE OF THE WEST
IS DEEP ROOTED AND
WHOSE PATRIOTISM IS
REAL AND TRUE.

PREFACE.

This book contains for the most part, incidents in my life as the wife of a stockman in the wild range land, and is actual history of the eastern part of Wyoming.

The life of the frontier range, as I have known it since childhood, is no more. The thousands of cattle trailed from the southern ranges to those of the north, have been divided into small herds and in the place of the long-horned, slim-bodied, racy looking dogie of the yesteryears, we find the slick, red, short-horned, well bred, slow-moving, harmless steer.

Yet we of the old west do not appreciate the change no matter how much we are assured that it is better so. But it must come—the picturesque cowboy with all his earthly belongings in his “war-bag” and tied on his pack horse, must give way to him of the present day with his mail-ordered saddle, long-shanked spurs, thirty-two or thirty-eight calibre pistol and imitation Stetson hat. We of the real frontier smile and long to see him on his first bronch! For the sake of the

good old days I have tried to picture him as you (the cowboys of the real frontier) and I know him.

If you are somewhat disappointed, have a little patience, for the years I might have spent in book learning and society polish, were spent in the saddle, and in the study of Nature and her great glory, and the time I might have been waltzing to the strains of silver wired orchestras, I danced to a tune on a lone stringed fiddle, with the jingle of spurs as accompaniment. And to you who will truly enjoy this book, let me say: Now that I know both, I would choose the old steadfast, big-hearted friends of the jingling spur.

E. JOY JOHNSON.

PREFACE.

This tale of love and adventure, dealing as it does with that State over which I have the honor to preside as Governor, is strongly recommended by me not alone to my own people but to the entire West.

It is a simple story, simply told, by a woman who deserves great credit for her ability in presenting a picture of our section of the country that is true to life.

The adventurous and rugged pioneers, who, unconquered by other foes, were ever at war with the ancient wilderness, pushing the frontier of the white man farther and farther west, are now all but a thing of the past. In the onward march of civilization they gave way to large cattle owners and ranchmen. The days of the latter, with all the pomp and glory which gathers around the name and fame of the cowboy of that era, are gradually giving way to a still later civilization. The cowboy himself is all but a thing of the past and with his exit the western stage is cleared of its most picturesque character. From the cowboy to the plow boy is a big jump to our minds, but in the annals of time the era of his day will be as a night in the passing.

The cowboy was a product of the West. No other country ever produced his like nor anything approaching his class. Fearless, fun loving and reckless, a type of man who while he has passed on in the natural order of all things material, has nevertheless left his mark for all time on the people of the West. Honest, true and brave, the heritage he has handed down will

serve to strengthen us through the changes and trials that are rapidly creeping into our Western life. When the day of the small farm owner arrives, as it is rapidly approaching, new experiences must be undergone, new vicissitudes must be met, new problems must be solved.

It is in solving these problems that the voice of the old cowboy speaking through his descendants, whether they be bankers, ranchmen or teachers, will prove a tower of strength to guide the course of the people of this great western empire so that it may become not alone the granery and the beef and mutton storehouse of the world, but the greatest manufacturing center of the known Universe. Here we have the soil, the water and the railroads. And we, the people who will make this promised land all that I hope to see it become, have in our veins the blood of the cowboys of the past. The heritage they have bequeathed to us will make itself a force for all that means BEST in the annals of civilization. Our duty is to develop this land and fulfill our destiny. We can have no higher incentive than the knowledge that we, the posterity of the men whom Mrs. Johnson has so accurately pictured, descend from a race of men whose equal the world never saw before and probably will never witness again.

Ryant B. Brooks.

Governor of Wyoming.

THE FOREMAN OF
THE JA6

CHAPTER I.

JACK RANDOLPH.

"What is there about this wild, free life that compels a fellow to give up luxury, home and friends for such hardships as these?" Jack wondered, as he tried in vain to sleep, but grew colder every minute. His bed, consisting of slicker and half wet saddle blankets, did not afford much protection on a wet Spring night, with the wind blowing as only it can blow over a Wyoming prairie.

"If I'd the smallest notion that my bronch was a-goin' to get hurt an' play out with me, I'd never used those last few matches to light no cigarette."

Suddenly he remembered that the pocket where he usually kept matches had a hole in it, and feeling the bottom of his coat, found to his delight a few had worked through the hole and down between the lining and the outside. Before taking them out he stepped gingerly, till he kicked against a good sized piece of

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dry pitch pine that he had noticed before darkness set in.

When the fire grew bright he had no trouble in finding plenty of fuel for he had halted in the thickest part of the pine hills. When he was warm and dry he attempted to sleep, hoping this would alleviate the pangs of hunger. He succeeded in getting into a doze when the blood-curdling, long-drawn howls of a gray wolf filled the air.

Jack had shot all his shells but two at some coyotes the day before. He knew the wolf would not come close enough to him to kill while the fire burned, and shot once to scare it away so it wouldn't bother his saddle horse, then lay down again, but before he got a chance to sleep, he heard heavy footsteps crushing the dead brush not more than a hundred yards away.

"What can that be? I know there weren't a critter close enough to have come into the hills since dark, and the horses that run on this range are too wild to come that close to the fire. I wish I hadn't shot at that wolf—I might a-found better use for that cartridge seein' this one is snapped."

As he put the useless gun back in his scabbard, he looked in the direction from whence had come the sound, and two great eyes peered at him from the blackness beyond the fire.

JACK RANDOLPH

"Mountain lion!" he exclaimed. "I'll not sit still an' let you jump on me, anyway, you fiery-eyed sneak!" Starting forward, he saw another pair of eyes close to the first ones, but did not stop. "Two to one isn't fair," he growled to himself, "but if it's a die, I'll meet it a-fightin'. That ain't no mountain lion. Them eyes are too high from the ground."

His saddle-horse neighed and the possessor of one pair of the terrible eyes raised its head and answered.

"Horses, by gosh! Who'd ever thought of horses a-hangin' in this part of the country, that was tame enough to come pokin' around a campfire! I'll get my rope and try my hand a settin' one o' them brutes tomorrow, 'cause I can't ride mine sixty miles to the ranch with that 'ere sprained leg."

The next morning he had no trouble in catching one of his midnight visitors, after which he turned his own tired, lame horse loose so it could rest and then follow him to the ranch of its own free will. He found the horses were old saddle ones, having several saddle marks on their backs and were used to hanging around close to camp. Jack laughed heartily now as he realized what a huge joke on him the whole affair had been.

"It's a mighty fine thing I didn't have any good cartridges. I'd likely killed one horse and scared

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tuther one away, an' I'd been hoofin' it to the JA6 now. I'd about as soon starve as to walk that far.

"Yes, howl, you gray murderous brute! I can laugh at you now because there's no fierce eyes starin' at me out of the blackness of the night among the pines. I don't believe I'm a coward—I ain't never been afraid of nothin' or nobody in a' even break, but this comin' up on a feller in the dark, lonesome pines that sigh an' shiver, moan an accompaniment to the howling of the gray an' the mockin' laughin bark of the coyotes as they make merry over a feast of young, tender veal, makes a feller sit up and take notice. "

"It's nearly a week since I left the ranch; it must be time for Charles an' his bride to arrive. I hope they won't get to the ranch till I have changed these muddy duds and filled myself plum full of grub, once more."

The thought of food made him dizzy and he was compelled to draw his belt a little tighter.

"This is a lonely, God-forsaken country for a man, though to a woman it must be a gol' darned sight worse, but when they get the prairie fever in their blood they would rather be lonesome than live back among the hills and the forests.

"I have seen some rough life an' a good sized number of hardships, but I'd rather take the bitter with

JACK RANDOLPH

the sweet out here, than suffer with the over-dress disease of society guys in that damp, fog-laden air of the civilized people.

“‘Civilized people,’ that’s what they call themselves, and we are heathens, but what I remember of those same civilized people gives me the idea that the missionaries that come to the wild, wild West are needed much more in the country they left. Do they feed the stranger within their gates and send him away rejoicing? Do they leave their houses open and tell the traveler to help himself? Do they dare to trust their neighbor or friend to put their individual mark on their property as does the western rancher?

“No sir—never! They tell their young sons and daughters we cowboys are low gamblers and drunkards! We play in the gambling rooms and play our own hard earned money,—they play behind dark curtains and play not only their own, but their employer’s money. We go up to the bar and drink with the boys. They drink in the cafés with women and young girls; then brag at their club of the fearful work the red wine did. When a range man has such a story to tell, he whispers it to the stars, then feels his neck to see if it is not stretching away beyond his collar.

“G’wan! You shamble-footed mustang! If you don’t do better’n this I’ll have to come before the gaze

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of the new lady in these gumbo trimmed togs, and go to bed half hungry, 'cause I'd be ashamed to eat a real fill in front of her."

When his mind wandered to the gentler sex, his hand unconsciously wandered to his pocket which held a small, worn memorandum book. It had, between its yellow pages, a tiny picture of a curly-headed little girl of about ten summers.

"I surely would like to know your name, little one; you likely will never know how much this tin picture of yours has helped me to keep straight."

Laughing, he thought of the day he had given up his task as wrangler for the outfit, and how, when he had staked his horse just outside of town, he wandered to the depot to watch the train come in. When it stopped, a tall gentleman and a little girl with big blue eyes and golden curls, stepped to the platform. While the gentleman was shaking hands and greeting some of the men who seemed very pleased to see him, the little girl came shyly up to Jack and remarked: "That's a very pretty whip you have," pointing to a colored horse-hair quirt which he held in his hand.

"Would you like to have it?" he stammered.

"Yes; I should like it very much. "

He handed it to her and she gave him something in an envelope.

JACK RANDOLPH

"You may have this to remember me by, for I'm sure you must be a good boy."

"Have I been a 'good boy,'" he thought, as he put the book back in his pocket.

"Some day I may find you, little girl, and if you don't change your mind about me, there may be a home-coming for you and me just like the one on the ranch to-day."

Day dreams! How many castles have you built in one breath, only to be torn down in the next?

When he rode into the corral he was somewhat relieved to learn that Charles Leslie and his wife would not arrive until the next day, and he would have plenty of time to "eat and clean" to his entire satisfaction.

When Jack Randolph, foreman of the JA6 outfit, which was located on the prairie about forty miles from the little town of L——, Wyoming, emerged from the house next morning, he looked more like his real self, for he had rested well and was good to look at—tall, muscular and straight, with brown hair and blue eyes that were deep and steady.

"Charles could not have chosen a better day for his home-coming," he said to Peddy as they went to the barn to make sure the horses were properly cared for before eating their breakfast.

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The chinook winds had melted the last of the snow, and the water ran in every draw and valley. Wild geese were often sighted as they proclaimed their presence with "Honk-honk," while they flew in regular triangle toward the snow-lands.

On the sunny slopes of the rolling country the pure white "prairie stars" or wild crocus lifted their dainty faces to the myriads of meadow-larks that topped the sage-brush, and swelled their beautiful yellow throats near to bursting, with their praises for the golden rays of the spring sun.

When breakfast was over the excitement began, for Jack had promised the "Boss" that when he returned with his bride he would find the ranch house shining like a hand forged spur. A hand forged spur would not seem much to some people, but to a cowpuncher, it was—with its flowers of inlaid silver—a thing to be proud of and kept bright and shining.

All did their best to help make good the promise of the foreman, Jack Randolph, to "slick her up" to fit the occasion, which in itself, was enough to cause a considerable stir in any bachelor abode. Every man on the ranch was cleaning to the best of his ability the part assigned to him by Slim, the cook, whom they decided ought to know more about housecleaning than the rest.

JACK RANDOLPH

Dishes were washed and scoured, floors were scrubbed, bed clothes were aired and shaken, while Slim was doing big things in the kitchen, cooking according to his idea, "suthing a girl could eat" like boiled beans, bacon, baking powder biscuits—good solid ones—dried prunes and some strong coffee to brace her up after the long ride from the station.

All preparations being completed, the boys strayed to the corral where a few rather "snorty" bronchos were "snubbed" or tied. These would afford them a little amusement until the arrival of the Boss and his bride.

A particularly handsome dapple gray horse, the most vicious of the bunch, was selected for the fun. He was a fine, well built animal, with keen, intelligent eyes and a prominent NT brand on his left shoulder. They called him "N T" on account of his brand being an odd one in the herd, he having been purchased from a neighbor, who had no "buster" who would tackle the "wild beauty."

After a struggle for freedom, "N T" was successfully saddled and bridled, ready for his mount. Now the question arose as to who should be the conqueror, or the conquered, of the gray terror.

Alfred Leslie and Jack Randolph were adepts in this fine art of the plains, and each was ready to

THE FOREMAN OF THE JAÓ

climb the gray, so in order to avoid any hard feeling, straws were drawn and it fell to the lot of Jack.

He coiled the rope or lariat so it could be conveniently held in one hand with the reins, then coming slowly and easily up to the gray and slapping him gently with the free hand, and adopting a swift, easy movement, before the horse realized what had happened, he was up in the middle of him. For a minute the bronch stood still,—then he seemed to realize that the frightful thing which had made him captive had perched itself on his back. For only a minute did he stop and look, then the fight began.

With one great snort, high into the air he went, then with all four legs stiffened like iron pegs, and four feet drawn close together, he struck the ground with a mighty jolt. Some one added to the insults poured upon him by striking him on the back with the end of a lariat, which sent him around the corral with a hump under the saddle like a miniature rainbow, and he bawled like a calf that had a red hot branding iron pressed close to his side. At first it had been fear,—now came the mad desire to conquer the something that sat so calm and steady on his back and would not be gotten rid of. For a few steps he pranced quietly around the corral, then dipping quickly first on one side, then the other till the feet of the



With a few hard, high jumps, he swapped ends completely

JACK RANDOLPH

rider barely escaped the ground, with a few hard high jumps, swapped ends completely before striking the earth where he stood, and turning his head, looked at his rider as though to say, "What! you still there?"

A few pricks from the sharp rowels of the spurs brought him to the realization that some new feat must be tried if he would free himself of this hated captivity and once more gallop over the broad prairie unfettered.

With a wild dash he made straight for the heavy pole fence, but before he reached it, his rider had guessed his trick and swung himself easily off on the other side, and had swung himself as easily back into the saddle, before he could dash away into the clear.

With a mighty effort the foam flecked animal shook himself, and made ready for the last great attempt for freedom. Around the high enclosure he trotted once, twice, three times, then with a few terrific jumps he fell like a dead thing, but his rider stood up astride of him, seemingly larger and mightier than ever. He had fought hard, but had been beaten, and with a pitiful nicker he laid his head in the dust and gave up the fight. So interested had they all been in the struggle for supremacy between man and beast, that they had not discovered the "Boss" and his timid little bride had been spectators of the whole affair.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRIDE.

Charles Leslie called them all up to the side of the buckboard and then went through a western form of introduction, in the following manner:

"Boys, this is my wife. Florence, this is Jack, the steady, so called because he is not admitted to the bar in town;" but a few lines between Jack's eyes and a considerable show of embarrassment, checked the compliments about to be showered upon him by the "Boss," for humanizing the keeper of a saloon who had secured the entire roll of a fellow cowboy and was ejecting him by force of sole leather.

Jack, after acknowledging the introduction, made his way to the bunk house. Harry Stanley, the handsome man of the ranch, looked rather longingly at the dainty little woman; then shaking hands awkwardly, turned and followed Jack's tracks to the bunk house.

With a glint of mischief in his big brown eyes and a broad grin on his face, Brownie stepped up and gave

THE BRIDE

the little gloved hand an airy shake, and said it was quite a treat to see "a lady" out there and he hoped she would like the free, wild country, at which she turned, and looking up into her husband's eyes, remarked:

"Oh, I am sure I shall." Brownie said to Jack after climbing into his bunk that night, "If a girl would look at me like that, I would like it in hades or any where else east of the old Missouri," and after a little quiet thinking, finished with: "She certainly does look lovin' at the boss," and grew very grave upon being accused by Harry of falling in love with her, then hesitating a little, he said, "What is she anyway—the Bossy, Bossess, or the Mrs. Boss?" at which Jack informed them she was "Mrs. Leslie," but they all stared in surprise at him and turned away in disgust.

Peddy had remained in the corral with "N T" in order to escape the ordeal of being introduced before the other fellows, and wondered if Mrs. Leslie would come up and talk to him as she used to when a little girl at school, for Charley had been her "beau" then, and she had been proud of the rough, honest boy who was now her husband. He had tied the horse and was walking to the house rather dreading the meeting, when, on looking up, he saw she had started out in

THE FOREMAN OF THE JAG

search of him and was coming with a smile and her hand extended, saying at the same time :

"Peddy, I am glad to call you brother. I hope we shall be great friends." Taken by surprise, he managed to stammer something to the effect that he felt sure they would be and wishing at the same time he could run in the opposite direction, when she unconsciously placed her arm through his erstwhile unwilling one, going into the house with him as though it were quite a usual proceeding.

Florence Moore or Florence Leslie, was not what the world would call a beauty, but those who knew her called her pretty. Some said she was not pretty, but attractive. She was a blonde, with large gray eyes that compelled your respect, and were very kind. She always had the appearance of being neatly and appropriately dressed, even on the ranch. She considered it next to crime to become negligent about oneself and often said, "If a girl expects her husband to remain her sweetheart, she must take as much pride pleasing his taste as when she was only his sweetheart." Of medium height, she tipped the scales at 125 pounds. A fearless horsewoman, an excellent whip, and many a bird had fallen at the crack of her rifle. To quote her husband's words she was "Just the girl for a rancher's wife."

THE BRIDE

Slim had escaped the night before and was still feeling a little shaky thinking of facing the new lady of the ranch, when some one calling him "Mr. Slim," stood in the door and assured him she had enjoyed her breakfast very much. She asked him to please tell her if he had another name. Moving uneasily on one foot, then on the other, he told her that in Missouri they had called him Howard Standing, but on the range he had always answered to the name of Standing Slim, or Slim Cookie, and he would be obliged if she would call him "Slim" like the boys—then he would not feel so strange. Telling Charles what Slim had said, they decided that as it was the custom of the country, it would be permissible for her to call the boys who wished it, by their given or nick names, "bein' it made 'em feel kinder easy like," as Slim had said.

At dinner that day they all had very good reason to believe Mrs. Leslie had been giving Slim some lessons in cooking, as the biscuits were much lighter and he also surprised them with some fine pastry. In the next few weeks many were the little comforts added to the house, and it would have been impossible for anyone to mistake it now, for a bachelor home.

The time was fast approaching when all the boys would be leaving for the spring round-ups, and the

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horses were being gathered in, so each man could pick out his string and get them in shape. A "string" consists of eight or ten head, one being used to carry the pack usually comprising two wollen double blankets, one cotton blanket, two "comforts" (or sugans as they are more commonly called by the cowboy) and a "war sack" containing an extra woollen shirt, a suit of underwear and one half dozen pairs of socks, while last but not least, the "cowpuncher's comfort" a very fair supply of either smoking or chewing tobacco. These are rolled in a tarpaulin or water proof canvas to protect the bed and sleeper from dampness.

Excitement was not lacking in the corral these warm spring mornings. Bronchs were being initiated and tenderfeet making a "rep." for themselves, by successfully "topping" some of the Leslie noted outlaws or hitting the trail for a job where the cayuses could not go quite so high.

While Florence Leslie longed sometimes for the beautiful trees she had been accustomed to, she was learning to love the long stretches of uninhabited plains. The sunshine seemed perpetual in this free, independent West, and she loved it too because it was her husband's chosen country, and did she not love him? Yes, more and more, as she saw how kind and considerate he was of her, how watchful for others,

THE BRIDE

and how honest and straightforward in all his dealings. He was very generous with his friends, but unrelenting with his enemies. No worthy man ever came to Charles Leslie for help without avail. People did not say of him, "That is a handsome man," but, "That is a fine, honest man." He was a purely western product, a little above the average height, broad shouldered and muscular, weighing about one hundred and sixty pounds, with brown hair and deep, steady blue eyes. All who had dealings with him found his word as good as his bond and his promises always fulfilled. One thing more before closing my description of the senior member of the firm of Leslie Bros,—he had never been known to drink even one glass of liquor, or smoke one ounce of "the weed," and the younger brother following the lead of the older, had said many times when "invited up:"

"No hard feelings, boys, but none of that in mine," but if the chips were stacked in front of him he was always "ready for a two or twenty-two hour game," usually playing a "lucky" hand as there was no fire water in his brain. Alfred Leslie was a man of few words, honest and sincere and it was often said of him that he never spoke an angry word to a friend, and like all natives of the new country, was fearless in the extreme. Neither man nor animal feared him, for

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one look into those kind, brown eyes told them he was a friend.

He had just come in from a long ride after some of the horses had broken the fence and given him a great deal of trouble; he left them safe in the corral, from which he had just emerged. Saddle and bridle being disposed of, the tired cowboy stretched himself in the sunshine for a little snooze before the cook would call dinner, when a tall, dark stranger rode into sight around the corner of the barn, with the accustomed salutation:

"Hello pard! What's the chance to get a square and a feed for my horse?"

He was asked to put up his horse and was shown where to find grain for the poor, hard-ridden creature, then courteously but coolly invited in to dinner, for it was quite evident to the other boys that Peddy did not take very powerfully to the newcomer. "Something, somehow, uncommon for him," Harry told Jack as they lay looking up at the stars that night, for they preferred the smell of the fresh budding sage-brush to the odor of a kerosene lamp, in the rather crowded bunk house. The next morning the newcomer giving his name as Tom O'Day and his stamping ground, Big Horn Basin, said:

"Is there a chance for a job?"

THE BRIDE

The Boss asked him hadn't he pack or bed. He said he had none, having played them off at poker in Casper. He was told they were in need of one more man, and if Zang, one of his men, did not get back, must have two, for the Pool round-up. But they did not know what they could do for a bed for him as all the beds would be in use and it would be impossible to go to town before the round-up started. After a little deliberation, O'Day told Peddy if Zang would not share his bed with him he would use his saddle blanket and slicker.

"It won't be very heavy, but I have done it before," and Peddy answered nothing but gave him a searching look which O'Day did not seem to appreciate and turned away on the pretext of fixing his saddle.

Later that day one of Mill's rep's. bound for the U-L on Lance Creek, informed them Zang was on the Cheyenne River and would be in next day with all the horses that had strayed up there if they could send a man to help him through the Buck Creek hills as they were a little wiry.

Peddy went next day to help Zang, taking the new man O'Day, with him, mounted on a fresh horse. They rode along in silence, Tom seeming a little sullen, and Peddy rather indifferent. They had

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crossed the hills to the east side and were letting their horses feed while they lay in watch to see the other horses before the latter should see them, but before they realized what had happened the "strays" came up a steep bank out of a gulch close to where they were and seeing the men, wheeled quickly and ran the other way; but rapidly as it all happened it was not quick enough to keep Tom and Zang from getting a good look at each other and standing transfixed as though they each had seen a ghost; quickly as Peddy had started after the fleeing ponies it was not too quick for him to catch that frightened look of recognition on their faces, ere they too started in pursuit of the scattering bronchs. The frightened animals were finally brought under control after a heated chase and successfully corraled at the home ranch.

Tom and Zang paid very little attention to each other for the next few days, each tending his own affairs but both watching Peddy out of the corner of his eye. If they sought to find out how much he had seen of their first meeting, they might just as well have watched a statue, for no man ever picked any secrets out of those eyes, be he stranger, friend or brother. But they, not understanding, thought he had seen nothing.

Zang had readily consented to the new man sharing

THE BRIDE

his bed. So it was settled that Tom O'Day and Zang should go to the Pool round-up, and get back before the beef round-up in July.

Jack Randolph and Brownie had been riding the creeks north and northwest of the ranch, gathering the cows and calves and throwing them into the pastures that they might have the protection of the Buck Creek hills during the cold spring rains. After they had them settled on water, they headed for the JA6, hungry and tired but not too tired to bring Slim's head out of the door with Brownie's "Whoop,-ee,-yah-oooo-ooop, oop, oop, ye oop-yah-hee!"

"Cookie, how's the chuck coming? Dish'er up quick and plenty," at which he was promptly told to go to H....—that Brownies were not big enough to give orders.

Brownie, nonplussed at this, shouted back: "Go bury that disposition, Slim, just to please me."

They had barely time to complete the washing process when they heard the welcome sound of the cook's voice, howling: "She's all ready; come and get her;" which, if translated, would be "supper is ready."

As they filed in around the table, the inquisitive Brownie asked who belonged to the sway backed, bow-legged thoroughbred in the barn. Someone had just come in a little late but had heard the question. It

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was Tom O'Day, and stepping quickly up to the door where the others were eating, he said, "I belong to that animal; do you object?"

Brownie answered that he only objected to such a "fearful disposition," at which everyone laughed, much to the discomfort of Tom, and then leaning over Jack, Peddy heard him say, "That's the fellow we saw without a pack, hitting the low places on Bear Creek the other day," while Jack, with an expression on his face that told more than words, said in a significant tone, "I thought I knew that horse!"

CHAPTER III.

IN THE GRAY WOLF'S DEN.

Harry Stanley who had been called to see his sick mother, living some fifteen miles east of the JA6 ranch, after stating her improvement to Mrs. Leslie, said he had surprised a large gray wolf eating on a JA6 three-year old steer in the thick timbered part of the Buck Creek hills, on the Old Woman Creek side, and that she had run, but while he had followed as close to her as was possible, he could not get close enough to rope her, and having no gun, could not kill her. After following her all afternoon, she had turned into the bad lands on Lance Creek and as it was with great difficulty that he had kept her in sight before, after getting there he had lost her entirely.

Charles Leslie told Jack to get up some good horses in the morning and then they could put the day in trying to catch the old wolf and find her den, as it was necessary to get the pups before they were large enough to run.

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A chill in the air that evening caused the men to seek the bunk-house early. Some were reading, some writing and some smoking. Zang was delving into the bottom of his war-sack. Among the things drawn out from that sack was a yellow and black striped vest which brought a look of pride to the owner's face, for he bought that vest while on his much talked of trip to Chicago with the "Boss," to market a train of cattle. He was holding it up for the inspection of the boys when the Boss came in to give some instructions for the morning; just as Zang turned away shaking the garment vigorously, two little pieces of red cardboard fluttered to the floor at Mr. Leslie's feet; he picked them up, then laughed heartily and asked Zang if he was still looking for that theater. But Charles Leslie was not allowed to tell the joke till Zang had left for the Pool round-up next day.

As they rode to the bad lands in the morning, the boys reminded Charlie of the red tickets, and he told them how Zang had met a Montana cowpuncher at the Stock Yards in Chicago and of how he had taken them up to the city and left them at the door of the Auditorium Theater where they purchased tickets for the evening, paying for two of the best seats in the house.

Securing tickets, they started in to array themselves in becoming attire after which supper was

IN THE GRAY WOLF'S DEN

in order, then for the theater; how they would enjoy it! But where in the devil was it? They could not have lost it more completely if it had been sunk in Lake Michigan. They hunted for that theater till eleven o'clock, then gave it up and were obliged to get a cab to take them to their hotel for they had lost that too. Getting the bell-boy to secure them a "bottle," they went to sleep to dream of broad prairies where buildings were not so high or thick.

Just then Brownie saw some prints of a large wolf paw in the sand, and on examining them closely, discovered that they led off in several directions. Charles Leslie and Brownie took up one trail, while Jack and Harry took up the other. It was no easy matter to follow the almost invisible tracks, and the sun was nearly in the center of the sky when they found the den.

Brownie and the Boss had been working about an hour, when Jack and Harry, still on the trail, came to find the others working to enlarge the opening of the hole to admit Brownie's body as he was going to fill his ears with pieces of his handkerchief, and gun in hand would crawl into the lair. He had been out of sight but a short time when a shot was heard, and after a little awful suspense, they saw two swiftly moving objects which proved to be Brownie's feet, for

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he was making desperate attempts to extricate himself.

Very soon they heard a voice calling to them to "pull him out of that dam'd hole!" They all fell to and pulled, but to no avail. The dirt had become loose and wedged him in. Jack's faithful Prince was brought close to the hole, and a rope fastened to the feet of the now impatient Brownie, and with a "dally" around the saddle horn and a short, steady pull, something emerged from that den that no mother would have recognized as her boy. Dirt was in his hair, on his clothes, in his eyes, in his boots, and in his pockets. But he was ever the jolly son of his mother, for stepping a little to one side, with a mournful face, he asked if he looked dirty. The Boss consolingly told him that he looked a "little soiled," but that it was worth several clean outfits to capture that batch of live-stock destroyers—eleven pups and the mother: "Many are the dollars she has cost me in horse flesh."

"Well," said Brownie, "I am glad we have got her, but it would take several pounds of horse flesh to get me to look into two more such balls of fire like that old gal had in her mask. Why Boss, they looked large as base balls. Say, she must have had a fearful disposition!"

They returned to the ranch very jubilant over their

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day's catch, with appetites as ferocious as the animal's they had slain. Brownie was just in the heat of describing his encounter with the she wolf,—of how terrible those fiery orbs had burned into his face, and the gnashing of those cruel fangs as she crawled nearer and nearer before he had fired that fatal shot, but Chicago spoiled it all by inquiring if he had a lantern with him.

"Say Tuberculer, where did you happen from?" inquired Brownie.

"Why down the creek where you sent me this morning to watch for the wolf,' said the Chicago tenderfoot. "I fixed that meat on a string and have been sitting up in that tree holding my gun all day. I would have got her all right if she had smelled that meat."

Not till the air was filled with ear-splitting laughter did he realize that he had been the victim of a cowboy's joke on a tenderfoot.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. LESLIE'S GUEST.

When the last mail had gone to town, Florence Leslie had written her dearest friend, urging her to pay a long-wished for visit.

"If you could only come! I am sure you would be delighted. Please try, dear Sunshine, and share the pure delights, of this, Nature's own grand country, with me. And the country is not all we have that's grand. There are some big hearted, sincere, handsome cowboys too, but I won't say much about them as I might frighten you out of coming," and with a few items of news she closed her letter.

Harry Stanley had been to town for supplies, and Florence was waiting for him to drive into the yard when she would get the mail. Eagerly she grasped the letters and ran to the house to read them for surely there would be one from Sunshine. And she was not disappointed. She tore the dainty envelope and oh, what good news! Sunshine would arrive the next week,

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Mrs. Leslie told no one but her husband. Sunshine's coming was to be a surprise to the boys, and she fell to wondering which one she would like. She thought if it were she, it would be Jack, for he was the most like her Charlie, but of course girls' tastes differed so; then they were all good boys except Zang Tompkins and Tom O'Day, the new man; of them she was not so sure, as she hadn't taken much of a liking to either one. A keen intuition formed part of her make-up. Zang had always avoided her, and Tom—well, there was something so peculiar about him she could not tell just what, only she felt inclined to look away every time he looked at her.

Mr. and Mrs. Leslie, after a long talk, decided to send trusty Jack to town to meet their expected guest. The day before Sunshine was to arrive at the little town of L——, Jack was told he was to drive in for a party who was coming to see the ranch and if they liked it they would stay for some time. Brown and Dandy were hitched to the canvas-topped buggy next morning, and a lively pair they were as they skimmed over the ground like swallows on that long stretch of thirty miles to the town, where he had been told to go to the only hotel the place boasted.

After Jack had disposed of his horses for the night,

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at Demmon's Livery, he sauntered to the hotel to inquire if his party were anywhere about. He was told the "young lady" had arrived, and that she was sitting at the last table to the left in the dining room.

"The young lady!" he almost screeched.

The clerk jumped so quickly and looked so astonished that Jack came to his senses and said:

"Oh, yes. I will see her after supper," and went in search of a restaurant after casting one shy glance through the open door where his charge sat quite unconcerned, finishing a light meal.

After a hearty supper, he went to find a barber-shop to get trimmed up preparatory to making his presence known.

On entering the hotel, the clerk informed him the "young lady" wished to see him in the parlor. He made his way to the second floor, wondering if her eyes were blue and kind, or black and snappy. He had time to wonder no more for he found himself tapping on a door marked "Parlor." The door opened and a pair of surprised blue eyes looked into his, then dropped, while begging his pardon.

"I thought," said Miss Golden, "it was Mr. Leslie."

He explained to her that Charles Leslie could not come, but that he had been sent in his place, and if she would permit him to accompany her, he would be

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ready to start after breakfast the next morning. She told him she would be ready at any time, so bidding her good-night, he descended to the office and smoked a cigarette before "rolling in."

Several of his friends had invited him to a game of anything he chose to play, but he refused and retired instead, dreaming of a golden haired girl with deep blue eyes and a fair face, a dainty hand held out to him, with no ring adorning it, and awoke to toss till breakfast, for he was positive he had seen that face and those great, sad, blue eyes before, but where and when?

Miss Golden had risen early and was in the dining room when he came down. As he entered, she motioned him to a seat beside her.

"It is a glorious morning," she said. "I don't wonder that Mrs. Leslie is so much in love with this country. I am so happy to get back to the West."

Upon asking her whether her home was in the West, she told him her childhood had been spent on the prairie about forty miles south of the little town they were then in, but that her school days had been spent in the East.

They had left early for the JA6 ranch and were now out several miles. As Jack had been busy keeping the horses in check, Sunshine had taken

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the opportunity and was quietly inspecting her companion. How manly he seemed, after the silly-molly-coddle college boys she had seen so much of the last few years—there was something about him that reminded her constantly of the old life. Could she have seen him before? Was it because he was so truly western—or that his cowboy dress appealed rather strongly to her? How much he reminded her of her father as she remembered him in her childhood!

Her father had said as soon as her sister Nellie and she were through school, he would return to the land he loved best; to the fresh air, the perpetual sunshine and the hospitality of dear old Wyoming! She was dreaming happy day-dreams of dashing over the prairie with Daddy by her side. How happy they would be! She had no brother and had always been Daddy's "boy." She remembered spending whole days in the saddle with him when he rode the range as foreman of the LZ outfit.

Jack noticing how absorbed she seemed, did not disturb her until they came to a high elevation on the head of Buck Creek; there the temptation was too great, so he brought the horses to a stand. She looked up quickly, and with a little cry of delight, as if divining his thoughts, said simply, "It is grand!" and drank to the greatest capacity the wonderful pano-

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rama provided by Nature, and covering a distance of seventy-five miles.

Just below them was the rolling prairie divided about equally by Buck Creek with its fringe of cottonwoods that extended down into the fine covered hillocks some three miles in length which were tributary to the Black Hills that formed a dark dividing line between the green prairie and the blue sky. In the midst of the hills the smoke from the Cambra coal mines could be plainly discerned though seventy-five miles distant.

Many times had Jack stood in this spot thankful to be allowed the privilege of enjoying one of Nature's greatest gifts bestowed upon mankind—to be able to appreciate the wonderful works of art placed here by the Creator. At last Sunshine broke the silence.

"When I first went East, I felt that I must choke; it seemed to me if I stretched out my arms I must touch the mountains on one side and the forest on the other. How I longed for my pony and the fresh wind blowing in my face and a gallop after the saddle horses before breakfast just to surprise and please Daddy!"

Jack gazed at her in wonder. How patriotic to the state of her birth! She loved it even as he, and to him it was all except Prince—would she care for Prince?

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Yes, he was sure she would; she was a Western girl and would surely care for a grand old horse like Prince. Mrs. Leslie had petted and fed him just as she had her pet trick horse Billy that her husband had given her when she first came to the ranch.

They were now nearing their destination which brought Jack to a realization that the happiest hours he had ever spent were drawing to a close. He had known her such a short time yet he felt that she was a part of his life. Perhaps he would never have the pleasure of her company alone again. He wished he might tell her how much he had appreciated those swiftly fleeing hours!

As the home of her friend came into sight, she told him she was grateful to him for so safe and pleasant a trip, and as she expected to stay for some time she would likely see him often, to which he thanked her and said if she should care to ride, that his horse was at her disposal and that "he allus had bin gentle with the women-folks."

They were in the yard now, and Florence Leslie rushed out of the house to greet her long-looked-for visitor. They were truly delighted to be together once more, and had so much to tell each other. Sunshine recited all the events of school and out of school, and they talked far into the night till Mr. Leslie call-

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ing into Sunshine's room asked who was ahead, and if they didn't think a little sleep and rest was in keeping. Suddenly realizing how very late it was they separated for the night with a "continued in our next" and in less than an hour, the house was in total darkness.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT OF SATAN.

Jack had brushed Satan till his black coat shone like satin, for Miss Golden wished to ride him to the head of Buck Creek accompanied by himself, where he was going to turn the "dogies" or southern cattle, to water. They had been shipped in recently from Texas, by Charles Leslie, and had not yet become located.

As Jack brushed and saddled Satan he wondered what the "S" on Miss Golden's suit case stood for. He had wondered ever since the day she came and he saw the initials S. G. on the case as he carried it into the house.

"I wonder if it could be Sarah or Samanthy. Maybe it's Susan or Sally. I don't see what it can be. It seems to me none of them there handles fits with Golden or with the girl either. I'd bet my six-gun its some new-fangled prefix I couldn't pronounce if I was a pure college bred."

As Jack led the horses out of the stable a pleasing

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sight met his eyes—a slender girlish figure attired in a white flannel shirt-waist, a navy-blue divided skirt, a Stetson hat, tan gloves, and boots, a navy and white string tie, fluttering from her collar. A ribbon to match, catching her hair together at the back of her neck, completed the very becoming costume, while a few golden wavy locks loosened by the wind, added not a little to the already bewitching picture. For the first few miles very little was said as Sunshine was experiencing some difficulty in controlling Satan.

“Satan!” yelled Jack, “what’s got the matter with you? I never see’d sich actions from you before. If I didn’t know you, you black imp, I’d jedge you fer a green bronch.”

For the last half mile Satan had quieted down a little then a sudden impulse seemed to seize him, and with head thrown high he dashed forward once more. Sunshine began to pull on the reins, but she soon realized she had lost all control of him, and the only thing for her to do was to try to keep him on level ground and keep her seat till he had partly exhausted his strength. Then perhaps she could stop him or Jack might overtake them. She seemed to be fairly flying. Looking back she saw Jack urging his horse with spur and quirt. On, on they dashed, till she became so dizzy she retained her seat only with great

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difficulty. The foam from the mouth of the mad or frightened animal flew into her face. Jack was at last gaining on them. She could hear him calling to her to hold tight; his voice seemed so strained and far away. What was that in front of them? Could it be the rock wall where Jack had told her the eagles built their nests on its jutting side? Sure enough it was! What should she do? If Jack did not reach her in a few minutes it would be too late, for Satan was headed straight for the top of that terrible place and they must be dashed fifty feet to a horrible death!

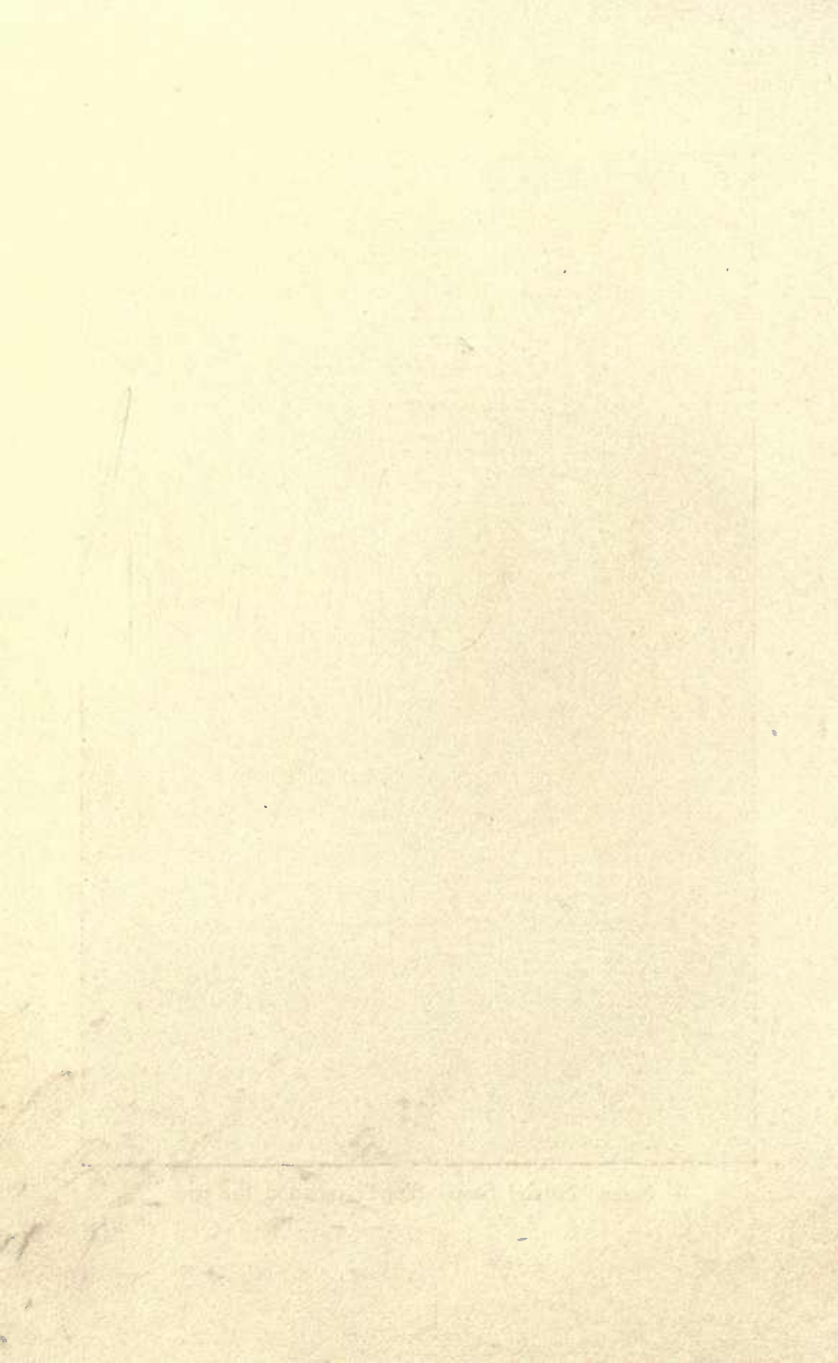
"Satan! Satan! Stop! Stop!" pleaded the girl, but Satan only plunged ahead unmindful of the fearful fate awaiting them. A few more jumps and then—but like a flash something passed in front of her, and she knew no more.

She moved and tried to get up but felt too sore. Where was she? For a moment she could not remember how she came to be there on the ground, her shoulder in a bunch of sage-brush and one foot in a bed of cactus! The sound of a horse shaking a saddle brought her to a realization of her awful plight. Jack! *Where was he? Oh God!*

Forgetting her soreness, she rose quickly to her feet, mindful only of the man who had perhaps given up life itself to save her. How fearfully near he had



"Satan! Satan! Stop! Stop!" pleaded the girl.



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come to sharing the same fate he had saved her from, for there he lay, at the very edge of the terrible rock wall Nature had formed, one leg dangling over its jagged side. With frenzied strength she partly carried, partly dragged the unconscious Jack to a safer place. Terrified beyond expression, she put her hand on his heart and feeling no response began crying and calling on him to speak to her.

"Jack, Jack, won't you look at me just once?" then laying her head on his breast she heard a few faint heart beats. Quickly jumping to her feet, she began to look for means of summoning help. Satan would cause no more trouble for his neck had been broken and he had died instantly. There was Jack's horse—a half broken bronch.

"Spider," she coaxed. She had managed to catch the end of the reins, and advancing slowly, she reached his side, then with a leap, she was on his back. The thoroughly frightened Spider started at a furious pace, but she didn't care for he was bridle-wise and he was going straight to the ranch. Up hill and down he went. The stirrup was pressing the cactus thorns deep into the tender flesh of foot and ankle, but she raced along unmindful of anything save one thought—to bring *him* help!

Florence saw her coming and ran to meet her with

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white, scared face, for it took but a glance to see she was riding the wild Spider. In a few words Sunshine told her what had happened, then nearly fell from the now rather docile horse. Florence mounted Spider, for the men were all away, after a few hurried instructions, to have water, some restoratives, a few pillows and comforts in the spring wagon when she returned with the driving horses. She soon came back and when she had shut them in the corral, succeeded in roping the two most gentle of the bunch. After considerable difficulty they harnessed and hitched them. Florence now climbed to the driver's seat and giving Sunshine the whip instructed her not to spare it. Never would they forget that wild ride. It took their combined strength to stop the horses when they reached the unfortunate Jack who had partly regained consciousness, and at their approach tried to raise himself only to fall back with a sickening thud that caused the blood to ooze afresh from the gash in his head and a groan to be emitted, which told of terrible pain.

While Sunshine gave him brandy and water, Florence proceeded to find how many and how bad were his wounds. She soon found he had sustained a fracture of the left arm, and a lacerated wound of the scalp. They had taken with them a few small boards

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broken from the side of a canned corn box and some cotton-batting such as one would use for "comforts," for Florence said if there were broken bones they would need them for splints, and with strips torn from a bed sheet they proceeded to set the broken bone, and succeeded remarkably under such trying circumstances. His head they decided to do nothing to until they reached the house. After making him as comfortable as possible with the quilts and pillows, they started, very slowly now, for the ranch. Florence driving and Sunshine trying to lessen the suffering that the unavoidable jolting and shaking of the rig, caused the injured man.

The ranch was reached after a tedious nerve-racking length of time, and Jack was gotten into the house and onto the couch where he lay while Florence proceeded to dress the scalp wound. After removing some of the clotted blood from the matted hair, with hot water and soap, she used her husband's razor to very good advantage, then proceeded to thoroughly cleanse the wound itself with more soap and hot water and a solution of carbolic acid. A few stitches were taken with linen thread and the head neatly bandaged. Jack was now resting more comfortably. What cowpuncher wouldn't be with beautiful Sunshine dancing around him looking after the duty as-

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signed her by Florence, of keeping the dressing wet with carbolic acid solution?

"Sunshine! What an appropriate name," he thought. How it thrilled him when he heard it for the first time that morning! "I should have know that was what that S. stood for when there ain't no other name that would fit her. Her hair is like the western sky in the evening when it makes you think maybe there is somethin' in what your mother told you about the streets of gold and the gates of pearl, an' her eyes got their blue from above where the color shows through in spots 'tween the big mountains of fleecy white clouds. Then when I feel her hands on my head putting on that carbolic dope, it's as if the first rays of spring sun was ashinin' on me after a hard, cold winter. Sort'a calm and satisfied like—and mighty glad I am alivin'. If Black Satan had toted that little girl with him over the 'Big Divide' I could never showed up at the ranch or afore the boys again. I would had to ditch my quirt and spurs and got a miner's lamp and pick, and stayed in the dark, for I couldn't a-stood the sunlight. She certainly is western though, for no girl that hadn't smelt sage-brush could a-stayed with Satan like she did. They wouldn't a had the grit. Give me the girl with nerves like steel and a heart like a yearling baby's! She cried 'cause I

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got hurt, then mounted that crazy Spider bronch an' rode him like mad. I could work my fingers to stubs for a girl like that. I know this is mighty foolish dreamin', but a little grumblin' of thunder never did spoil the bright light of the golden Sunshine!"

He was sitting in a big easy chair placed there for him by Sunshine who had told him that she knew the warmth from the morning sun on the sheltered rustic porch was far more agreeable to a restless, nature loving cowpuncher than the confinement of an artificially heated house even if he had helped to cut the logs of which it was built.

"I never saw a man take so much pleasure in a hard job as Charles Leslie did a-buildin' this here cabin. He wondered if Mrs. L'd like this and he wondered if she'd like that, but not a puncher in the outfit had a word to say when she came and they saw how much she set by all he done for her, an' she certainly has proved herself for she allus tries right smart to please the Boss. Sometimes when we make a long ride and have to camp over-night with another outfit and there's a woman in the house what tries to be the foreman, it makes a fellow open up his blinkers and thank his stars his foreman is a man and his wife can respect him."

"But Mr. Randolph, I am quite sure the boys are

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glad you are a man all right only I thought you were single? Florence did not tell me you had a wife?"

"A what?" said Jack.

"A wife."

"Me got a wife? Who said I had a wife?"

"You said the men ought to be glad their foreman was a man his wife could respect, and you are the foreman." Sunshine's eyes were twinkling with mischief.

"I was speaking of Charles Leslie, the foreman of the whole works, for my foremanship is scarcely worth talking of. The only girl I ever wanted right serious is so far out of my reach I don't dast to steal one thot in that direction, but please do me the favor of calling me Jack."

"Never venture never win," spoke up Sunshine, little dreaming he was thinking of her, and paying no attention to the last part of his sentence. With a bright red spot in each cheek she flounced into the house wondering why he had told her of the upstart who thought herself so much above him, for she acknowledged to herself she had known many men she admired less.

"I wonder if she really meant that for a challenge? I wish I could think she did; I would certainly make the venture. If I'd seen that girl ten, or even five

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years ago, I'd had a right smart bank roll now, instead of hellin' around all this time with only one hair covered brute to lay claim to, and him sold twict for poker chips and only led away with my own rope by the kind advances of the Boss. Better late than never. If I ever get out of this I'll throw away no more good money on such a good-fer-nothin' cause. I'll b'gin to pad my bank-roll with the real goods."

CHAPTER VI.

TRACY AND PATCHEN.

"Mr. Leslie, have you seen Patchen in any of your bunches of horses that range here on Buck Creek? A neighbor told me he saw Long Bill aridin' him. But the other day he saw him running with a bunch of your horses in the Buck Creek hills. Long Bill thinks 'cause I'm a girl he can ride my horses when and where he wants and I can't do nothing but he don't want to be too sure of that. I'll shoot at a target with him any time and bet my saddle I can beat him if he'd give me fair play, but he has never done that. I will warn him he better leave my horses alone," said Tracy, the well known "Cow-Camp Queen."

"Tracy, I would never try to take revenge on Bill or any one else for that matter; that would be mighty poor business for a young girl, then it would not be necessary, for I don't know anyone whose rights the cowboys would fight for quicker than the Cow-Camp Queen's."

TRACY AND PATCHEN

"Who has been interfering with her rights?" Harry asked, his face a little white with excited anger.

Hearing a familiar voice he had come quickly out of the bunk house just in time for the last part of the conversation.

Tracy seeing how quickly Harry resented any hurt to her, calmed herself and quietly asked him if he had chanced to see Patchen. He told her he had put him in the pasture that morning intending to bring him home after supper.

"If you will tell me where I can find him I will get him and be going."

"No indeed you won't," said Charles Leslie, "you get off that horse so I can put him up, and Harry will run your horse up for you in the morning."

But Tracy told him her mother was alone and she must go back that night. Seeing they could not persuade her to stay till morning Harry saddled up and went after Patchen, while Mr. Leslie accompanied Tracy to the house and introduced her to his wife and Sunshine. The Cow-Camp-Queen was shy and quiet at first, before the two women, for she was more at home among the cowboys, having worked with them in the corral and ridden with them on the plains since she was but ten years old. She had seen very little of those of her own sex except her mother whom

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she adored, having no sister and only one brother who had ridden the range since his boyhood days with Alfred Leslie, while Tracy was looking after the interests of the home ranch.

Good natured Mrs. Leslie soon put the girl at her ease, and she found herself chatting and laughing as happy as Sunshine and the hostess.

"I saw Zang on Duck Creek a few days ago, and he told me you had ridden Black Satan the locoed horse, and that you had come near getting killed. Only for Jack's daring you'd went over the rock-wall. I tell you Jack Randolph is the fellow that is always there when he is needed most. Zang said Satan would never went over that wall, that when he got to the edge he would a-stopped but if he had stopped, that wouldn't a prevented you from going. I tell you any horse going the rate a run-away locoed horse goes, and stops right sudden, stiff legged, you'd have to be a better stayer than I am if you didn't go over his head. I said 'Zang you're crazy in the head, and you never rode a locoed bronch. I have, twice, and I hope I'll never happen on another. I'll take the green bronch every time; they may do some hard ragging, but you're looking for that, but you don't know what to look for in a locoed cayuse.' I had a tough roan horse that would never be shot for his beauty. He

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was a "seven cross L" (7XL) belonging to Bill Munson, foreman for the OW in Montana, but he gave me the use of him for breaking him, and I did not know he was locoed, neither did Bill. I had been riding him about three months but never had reason to run him any till one day a bunch of range cattle broke into our little hay patch, and I gave the roan a big run. He got pretty warm and started across the flat to the OW on Old Woman Creek. I got tired pulling and said, 'Old boy have your way, if you want to run so bad.' Then of a sudden I tumbled he was locoed and tried hard to stop him but he couldn't see it my way so kept right on agoin'. He headed now straight for the OW corral and did not slacken till he hit it with his head. Then I hit the ground over the fence on the inside and I turned to look at him with red-hot mad in both eyes, but I just laughed for he was trying to climb that fence he hated so bad to give up running. If he hadn't struck that fence I reckon he'd been running yet. I turned him out and thot I would never ride him again but my little string of saddle horses got pretty well rode down and I concluded to try him once more. He was jogging along, doing fine till a big rattle snake shook its tail right under his nose and he couldn't stand for that so away he bolted—right down across a prairie-dog town. It

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was just after a rain and the gumbo made him slip and slide till he succeeded in planting two front feet in a prairie-dog hole and for the second time that loco unloaded me. This time there was no fence to climb so he just kept going and I had to ride two days without a saddle till I could get him in a corral and unburden him of its weight."

Supper was now announced and they filed into the dining room and were seated round the table when Jack came in, his head still bandaged and his arm in a sling. When Tracy saw him she jumped quickly to her feet and stood looking at him and not seeming to see the hand extended in greeting touched the wounded arm gently, and said, tears of sincere sympathy blinding her soft brown eyes:

"Jack, I did not know it was this bad. Miss Golden must indeed feel grateful to you."

"No, Tracy, it is I who should feel grateful for her kindness to me since the accident, for it was on account of me she went through that terrible deal. She might never have rode Satan if I had not recommended him, but Tom was the only man on the ranch who knew he was locoed and I cannot understand why he never mentioned it."

Throughout the meal Harry and Sunshine spoke very little, seeming wholly engrossed in their own

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thoughts, Sunshine frowning a little when Jack showed Tracy a trifle more attention than was absolutely necessary, while Harry seemed to lose his usually good appetite.

Supper over, Harry saddled his horse, and attempted to saddle Patchen for Tracy as she told him she would ride him home and he knew she would ride nothing else. Tracy who had been watching him from the window announced to Mrs. Leslie and Sunshine that she was going out to teach Harry how to saddle a horse. They told her promptly they would go with her as they needed a few lessons in that line themselves.

Patchen was on his worst behavior preferring to stand on two feet rather than on four. Harry had succeeded in roping and bridling him, but getting a saddle on him was a much more difficult task. Tracy went into the corral and with rope in hand walked up to the snorting horse and the next time he reared, deftly threw the rope and caught him by the front feet, then, after taking a half-hitch, she handed the rope to Harry instructing him to pull it tightly. She took the reins in her left hand and dexterously proceeded to saddle her favorite. Putting the blanket on his back she slapped it all over, and not very gently, then throwing the saddle on, she drew the front cinch

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tight, while the flank cinch was left much looser. She said it was growing late and they must be a-riding.

Harry took the rope from Patchen's feet and she climbed into the saddle, when to her great surprise he trotted gracefully around the corral with not even a kink in his back. Harry now being ready, came out and opened the corral gate, while Tracy guided the Strawberry-roan out into the open flat, and just to show his appreciation of freedom from that pen, he "swallowed his neck," and went high, wide and handsome. Tracy adding to the excitement by using her sunbonnet for a quirt, fanned him from head to tail, all the while screaming like an Apache Indian.

Of a sudden he concluded he would rest, and stood stock still. Spurs, quirt, sunbonnet, and rope were used vigorously, but to no avail; as a last resort Tracy reached back and grabbing his tail, pulled with her might, yelling like a cow-puncher just leaving town. "Whoop-e-ye-whoop-eee-yah!" Nothing more was needed for he ran like a streak of lightning over the hill. Just before getting out of sight, she raised high in the saddle and waved her bonnet to the ladies watching from the ranch.

"Florence, what a wonderful girl she is!" said Sunshine. "How brave, and free, and innocent. Who is she most partial to—Jack or Harry? I thought it

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might be Jack because she seemed to take his injury so much to heart, but judging from Harry's behavior one would think he was the lucky man."

"Her treatment of Jack," said Florence, "I am quite sure, was just a friendly interest, which proved her kind, good heart and tender sympathy, for anyone in distress. I have heard much of her and how kind she is. Everyone knows Tracy Petz or 'The Cow-Camp-Queen' as she is more commonly known."

The day had drawn to a close and the great Wyoming moon shone in all its resplendent glory, when Tracy and Harry passed the Tim ranch. Nothing seemed to be stirring; only the occasional long drawn, spine-crimping howl of a gray wolf broke the silence. Patchen had concluded to come down to a respectable gait at last, and Tracy started the conversation by asking Harry how he liked Miss Golden.

"I hardly think I am as badly taken up with her as *you* seem to be with Jack Randolph," he answered, drawing his breath rather quickly.

Tracy stopped her horse instantly.

"Harry, if you think that way, don't go another step, for if that is all the belief you can have in me I'd rather go alone."

"Little girl," he said (he was standing on the ground beside her now), "can you ever forgive me?"

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It is because I care so much that makes me brutal. It's only a brute will get sore that way at his trusty old pard. I don't know why I got sore, 'cause Jack's a man, an' if he loved you, an' he knew you loved him, back he'd come to my face and give it to me straight, not behind my back like I done with him to-night."

"Don't feel so hurt with yourself, Harry. I might have done something rash myself if I thot you liked golden hair and blue eyes better than rough brown hair and brown eyes."

"You needn't be afraid of that, little girl, 'cause no yellow-haired, blue-eyed girl ever could take the place of my brown-eyed, brown-haired queen."

"Get on your horse, Harry, mother will be watching for me and maybe getting scared, wondering why I am gone so long."

They rode faster now and soon turned into the corral at the little H7H ranch on Old Woman Creek, which was Tracy's home, and hearing them, her mother looked out and called.

"Yes, mother, it's Harry and I. We'll be in in a minute."

The horses were soon taken care of and they found a tempting lunch awaiting them, consisting of fried sage-chicken, bread and butter, buffalo berry jam, home made cheese, coffee and plenty of fresh milk, for

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unlike most ranchers, Tracy milked a cow instead of using condensed milk. They ate heartily despite the fact that they had had a good supper at the Leslie's. Harry occupied the only spare bed that night, it being in the little tepee tent on the bank above the house, for he had asked Mr. Leslie for a two days' leave of absence to help Tracy round-up and brand the H7H calves, thus relieving her of performing this arduous task alone, as she had always been obliged to do.

All day they rode. He went in one direction, and Tracy in the other. Everything on Old Woman and Sage Creek being gathered, they both got in about dark with a string of cows and calves, and as Tracy assured Harry there would be very few H7H cattle ranging off the two named creeks, they decided to brand the following day thus enabling him to return to the JA6 that evening to report for duty the third morning.

The morning brought a west wind, and a few flakes of snow came fluttering down which increased in number as the day advanced, but having no place to hold the cattle, they decided to brand, and hold them in the corral that night that they might have shelter under the shed in case the storm grew worse. They were just through branding when the wind changed

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to the northwest and a fearful blizzard set in. It was four o'clock when they were through and went into the house and by five they could scarcely see the corals and barn. As evening advanced the storm grew worse. Harry felt he could not leave Tracy to feed and care for the cattle alone and made up his mind to stay until the storm abated, much to the satisfaction of Tracy and her mother as they feared his going out in such a blinding storm, for it would be an easy matter to get lost on a night like this and so be frozen to death.

CHAPTER VII.

IN DUTY BOUND.

The storm that had been but a little western breeze and a few fluttering flakes of snow that melted as soon as they lit, by middle afternoon, was a blizzard, which increased in fury with every hour. Charles Leslie had told his wife she need not expect him for dinner, for judging by the way the stock was playing and sniffing the air, a good sized storm would develop by evening. His judgment had not been in error, and at dinner Jack had announced that if the storm did not let up a little in two hours, he would saddle up and go to his assistance and send Tuberculer back to the ranch, as a "tenderfoot" would only be one more to look after, and it would be well nigh impossible to get those dogies into the shelter of the Buck Creek hills, especially if the storm and wind should change to the northwest. Forty thousand dollars looked rather small tied up in southern dogies that had not yet become acclimated.

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Jack was in the corral saddling his horse when some one rode into the yard and shouted to him not to think of going out, that the storm was bad enough for a well man to face. It was Brownie after fresh horses. Changing his saddle to another horse, he went into the house to get warm, and tell Mrs. Leslie the Boss sent word for her not to worry; they would be home as soon as they could get the dogies into the hills. She wanted him to take a lunch, for they had had nothing to eat since morning, but he said he had been instructed not to bother with it as they could not stop to eat it. As soon as he had warmed his numbed fingers, and taken a cup of hot, strong coffee, he started back, accompanied by Jack, whose left arm was still in a sling. It was no easy matter to find the men and cattle until they got within hearing distance, and were guided by the sounds of the two Leslies shouting at the obstinate beasts.

Jack and Brownie kept the cattle moving while the Leslies changed horses and sent Tuberculer to the ranch with positive instructions not to try to guide the horse as he would take him safely home, so giving Monte a loose rein he started for the ranch. The horse being tired it seemed a very long distance to the inexperienced fellow, and he had about made up his mind they must be lost. He was chilled to the bone

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and pictures of himself falling asleep,—“the last great sleep”—as he had known of people doing, who had been frozen to death, rose up before him, when he heard a horse whinny, which welcome sound his faithful little pony answered. Looking up he saw they were nearing the corral. Slim the cook, was in town taking his spring lay-off for he had told the boys he had to go on a “high-lonesome” before the heavy summer work began. Consequently Mrs. Leslie and Sunshine were alone on the ranch, having volunteered to do the cooking until Slim should return. Mrs. Leslie had seen Tuberculer as he came into the yard, and putting on one of her husband’s heavy coats and a cap she went to the barn to take care of the horse, sending Tuberculer to the house, for she knew he was suffering severely with the cold.

Florence and Sunshine prepared supper, but no one came to eat it, and they had little appetite to eat alone. It was getting dark and they were very anxious. Florence could stand it no longer, so wrapping herself as well as she could in order to be able to walk, she started out. Sunshine protested and wanted to go, but Florence felt she knew the country better so told her to stay and keep warm fires and the soup and coffee hot for, she added, “I may get very cold myself before I get back.” Sunshine assured her she

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would do as she wished, but as Florence was in delicate health, she feared grave consequences. She had tried to dissuade the latter from her purpose but nothing could change her mind, and taking a lantern in one hand and a shot gun in the other, Mrs. Leslie filled her pocket with shells and started out. Following the pasture fence going east, she plowed and stumbled through the snow until she reached the top of a knoll. She held the gun in the air and shot three times; then holding the lantern close to her, she tramped round to keep warm. Every few minutes she would put the lantern down and shoot. After what seemed a very long time and she began to get very cold, she listened.

"What was that?" She shot again. "It was an answering shot!" She was cold no longer for she could jump around now with real joy. Again she shot, but at longer intervals, for she was afraid her shells might give out before they could reach her. When she had used all but the last shell, she began to shout as loud as her lungs would allow. At first there was no answer and her heart sank, but after waiting a short time she tried again and much to her joy, her husband's voice answered her, a little shaky, but nevertheless the dear, familiar voice! She was trying so hard to be brave, but the trial of the last few hours

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had been very hard on the not overly strong little woman. She called again and the answer came very close now, but the men surely must have been lost for the sounds had come directly from the south. Putting the lantern on top of the fence post she could just discern objects moving toward her. She felt she must not give up, for they needed her help. They would be hungry and cold and perhaps ill.

They had reached her now and she was in her husband's arms while he was calling her his brave, little wife. Only for a minute did she let them stop. Brownie was leading Jack's horse and Peddy who was encouraging him to keep up just a little longer, was fairly dragging him along by the arm. Taking her husband's hand she begged them to hurry. She saw by Jack's heedlessness and the manner in which he hung his head, he would have to be carried if they did not reach the ranch very soon.

They had nearly reached the house when the door opened and a shot rang out. It was Sunshine. They answered her with a glad shout. She ran to them and clasping Florence in her arms nearly carried her into the house telling her she was a brave, brave dear, and that she had gone nearly mad fearing they were all lost and must be frozen. Florence assured her she was all right and asked her to go quickly to the as-

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sistance of the others. Just as she turned toward them, Jack fell helplessly into a chair while his head sunk heavily on his breast. Springing to his side, she called Tuberculer to her assistance, and lifting him on the couch, gave him a drink of brandy; after she had rubbed him vigorously for a while, then gently, he opened his eyes and tried to smile, but it was a weak, tired smile. Inquiring if the others were there, he was told they were, so closed his eyes again and seemed to sleep. The rest of the party were much better and Mrs. Leslie being assured they were all right, felt the necessity of a little rest and quiet, so retired.

The hot soup and warm fire had done much toward reviving every one with the exception of Jack who had been weaker than he thought and had taxed his strength much too far. Sunshine and Tuberculer announced their determination to do what they could for him at least the first part of the night, while the tired ones rested, and if he grew no better they would arouse Peddy and Brownie toward morning. However, after the others had gone to bed, Jack was seized with chills which they could not stop until daylight was peeping in through the windows. Then fever took their place and when Peddy came to see him about sun-up, he was going over in his mind the

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terrible experience of trying to overtake Satan and save Sunshine.

Harry came home about eleven o'clock and finding his pal so sick, offered to make the trip to town for a doctor which offer Mr. Leslie gladly accepted. Everything possible was done for the sufferer, who seemed to be in great pain. They had no sooner put the hot applications on one part than the pain moved to another; from shoulder to elbow then to the wrist, from whence it would take a turn in the other shoulder.

Harry rode Prince, Jack's trusty horse, as he was large and strong and swift. The roads were drifted over very badly in places, and he did not reach the little town of L—— until nearly dark, and found Dr. C. A. Magahy, the new physician, out on a case that he could not possibly leave until morning. There was nothing for Harry to do but wait, and early morning found them on their way, reaching the sick man about one o'clock. After an examination, the doctor pronounced it rheumatism and proceeded to do all that was possible to alleviate his suffering. Dr. Magahy having met Jack while on his trip to town after Sunshine, had taken a great fancy to the honest, dark eyed cowboy, and told him as soon as the weather would permit if they would bring him to town he would himself accompany him to Hot Springs, South

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Dakota, and place him in the care of a doctor who had a sanitarium where the baths would do him more good than medicine.

The warm spring sun and chinook winds soon melted the snow, and Harry and the Boss took Jack to town, and stayed with him until the train pulled out bearing him and the doctor with it to what promised to be health and strength.

Mr. Leslie had found an opportunity to tell Dr. Mahagy to see everything that was possible was done to relieve the invalid. "As loyalty to me has caused this suffering, so shall my loyalty to him as a friend, see him out of it," said the Boss.

When Jack left the ranch he asked Sunshine whether she would still be there when he returned. "I shall stay until Fall, and I hope to have many a pleasant ride with you before then," and holding out her hand she wished him a speedy return of his usual good health, and tried to be very calm, but with a great effort. Noticing this, the perspiration stood out on his face. Could it be, did he dare to believe, this girl really cared for him? No,—he must not let himself even think it, for fear he would have to face a terrible disappointment. "She is very sympathetic and only thinks of me as a sufferer," he said to himself.

At the Springs the doctor had told him if he kept

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on improving he could go back to the ranch in two weeks. He was thinking what a long two weeks it would seem. When he was able to walk around he went to the post office one day, believing perhaps Harry might write a few lines telling him what the boys were doing, and *maybe* he would mention Sunshine. There was not only one letter but three. One was from Harry and one from the Boss. How kind and thoughtful of him! The other was a dainty, square envelope emitting a delicate odor of violets. With a much lighter step and a smile that was symbolical of the joy he felt, he made his way back to the seclusion of his room. Harry wrote that the boys were nearly all on the round-ups and he would leave the next morning to join the Twenty-one; it would start at the U-L on Lance creek; also that Prince was doing fine under the care of Sunshine, who allowed no one else to ride him, but herself. Mr. Leslie, that he missed him very much. He also wrote they, meaning himself, his wife and Sunshine, were staying in town for a few months and would be glad when he would be able to get back to the ranch to help Peddy look after things. "I have a surprise for you when you come," he had said in a postscript. Leaving the one which meant most to him, till the last (of course it

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was from Sunshine) with none too steady fingers, he opened it.

"Dear Friend:" it began, "I know you will want to know how Prince is. He is the most sensible horse I ever saw. We came to town to stay for a few months and I coaxed Mr. Leslie to let me bring him with us, for I was afraid the boys would neglect him. I ride him often. Write and let us know how you are getting along. Hoping you are improving very fast, I am,

Sincerely your friend,

Sunshine Golden."

"'Taint so bad bein' a hoss, after all," he said, and putting all three letters in his pocket, determined to return in a week or so, if he continued to improve.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ROUND-UP.

The bunk house door swung back with a bang, and Slim who had reached the ranch late the previous night, after his long spree, sang out: "Roll out, you lazy time-killers; the young Boss called you nigh on to two hours ago. Slide into you duds, coze I see him acomin' down in the pasture on a high gallop with your horses for the round-up, and not a cow puncher with his breakfast down ready to help him cut 'em out."

When Peddy had the horses in the corral they had dressed, washed and gulped down a breakfast that would have taken a man of leisure, two hours to eat. For nowhere have I found men who could eat as large meals in as little time with as healthy a digestion as a cowboy.

What a sight for an Easterner the corral would have been that morning! Five cowboys with ropes flying in the air to nestle around the neck of some fighting,

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snorting bronch that was taken resisting, through a gate into an adjoining corral! When each had caught nine horses, the number they deemed necessary for every man, the others were turned out for use when they should return with the present string "all in," and deserving a rest. One horse in each string is used to carry the pack or bed. Buck Saffel, who was one of the new members of the JA6 force, was a large, jolly, fearless rider who was willing to take the worst horses of the outfit that poor unfortunate Jack had chosen for his string before meeting with his accident.

Harry and Sam Thomas (or Uncle Sammy as the boys called him) were sent to join the Twenty-one round-up starting from the "U bar L" (U—L) on Lance Creek, working down Lance Creek to the mouth of Old Woman, then Lightning Creek from the mouth to the Beaver Dams, working all the tributaries, then Cow Creek and tributaries, which will include Snyder and Bull Creeks—thence Cheyenne River from the Fiddleback Ranch down to the mouth of Black Thunder, and work Black Thunder and Little Thunder to the head of said creeks, also working all their tributaries.

No wild-west show can exhibit the cowboy and his wily little bronch as they are in their natural elements.

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The mad ride on the untrained equine is to the cow-puncher what the chariot races were to the Romans, and the bull-fight to the Spaniards. For many years it was the only source of blood-stirring amusement on the vast plains of the West. A man's knowledge was gauged by his ability to "set-em," and his agility in "drawing a gun." Buck was taking a few of the "kinks" out of his bronch before starting out with eight of the snortiest ones the ranch could boast of. After a few rounds were made he stopped, and reaching out his hand, asked Harry for the "makings," while holding the reins in one hand and at the same time using the other and his teeth he made a cigarette and waited for the bronch to decide whether he liked to go up and down or back and forth.

"Well bronch," said Buck, "you can dance the rest of this out by yu'sef while I get these here others ready for the big drive," and proceeded to tie the pack on the wildest member of his string, which was no plaything, when it came to resistance. After a fierce struggle he succeeded in fastening the pack securely on its back, also in tying two more horses, one behind the other, to its tail. Three more he fastened in similar manner leaving the remaining two free, for they would not leave the others, and in this manner, he could control them all.

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"Your instructions Peddy, and I'll be hitting the trail, for it's a long fifty miles to the Fiddleback, and can't say I relish adrivin' them snaky bronchs by moonlight."

"I think you can make Taylor's before dark. Put the horses in the corral. If you turned them in the pasture they would be back here by daylight. I am quite sure you can catch the Four-jay wagon before they leave the Fiddleback ranch next morning. I cannot say where you will have to go from there as I do not know how they expect to work, but you can work with them till they break up, driving everything along and bringing all with you. The rest I leave to your judgment. So-long and good luck!"

"Thanks, I'll not forget, Peddy. So-long."

Buck had not gone far before he realized he had made a big mistake in not putting the pack horse between the other two. They led him a merry chase and the moon was shining when he turned them into Taylor's corral, and you can bet the next day found the mistake rectified and the bad pack horse between his followers of the previous day.

Harry and Uncle Sammy had very little trouble getting their horses over the six miles to the U—L where they joined the round-up, and threw them into

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the cavey under the watchful (?) eye of the horse jingler.

No country lad from the green mountains of old Vermont, or the north woods of Wisconsin, ever laughed so hard, or acted more foolish at a circus than does the cowboy, be he young or old, in the first few days of the Spring round-up.

Some have spent a hard winter riding—facing freezing, blinding blizzards. Not Eastern blizzards, where the mountains break the wind and the snow comes fluttering down in soft feathery flakes, but a blizzard of the plains, where the wind blows fifty to seventy miles an hour, whipping the snow to powder that sticks to clothes and face in a frozen mass, and sifts like flour through every crevice. If you have never seen one, you cannot realize its severity. Some who had saved a little of their summer's wages, hung around the towns gambling or doing odd jobs, chafing like caged lions for the first signs of Spring, and life—real life, once more. Do you wonder that the Spring round-up is a sort of jollification party where everyone tells his joys and sorrows since the gathering of the last shipment of beef in the Fall?

The "reps" had been falling in from all directions since nine o'clock, some coming long, and some short

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distances, until twenty-five cowboys were in camp. The cook had been busy for some time and the boys were beginning to sniff in the direction of the Dutch oven from which savory odors were floating when a voice sang out just over the bank of the creek.

"Hey there, you loafers, is this the Twenty-one?" Glances were quickly exchanged in camp; then a smooth talking individual stepped to the edge of the bank and said:

"Yes sir; this is the Twenty-one round-up; anything we can do for you?"

"Yes; get your horses and help me get these damned crazy bronchs in that cavern."

Eyes twinkled, teeth gleamed and sides shook, but Mr. Swellhead over the bank was none the wiser. All hands were soon in their saddles, but not too soon to hear Posy's undertone remark that "the court of the Kangaroo would sutenly have to convene before they made a drive." And convene it did ere the sun went down that day.

It took but a few minutes for experienced hands to get the equally experienced horses in the cavey.

"Who you rep'n for?" was asked of the ostentatious gentleman.

"I'm no rep. I came to take charge of the horses for this round-up," was the condescending reply.

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"Then how'd you come by the horses you brot in?"

"They belong to another fellow that was comin' here too. He asked me to bring them while he went after a 'bunch-quitter'."

"What's your name, young feller?" he was asked by the wagon boss.

"Mr. Jack Jensen." (With head very much erect).

Tom Horn, jumping up from his seat on the bed-wagon tongue, holding his hand up for a society hand-shake, assured Mr. Jensen they were very much gratified with the company of so honorable a gentleman. The broncho kid, from an English home, bowed low before him, and addressed him as follows:

"The kid, Me lord, who will be pleased to be of service to you."

George Hill, stepping very gingerly, announced to "Me lord" that "luncheon" was ready and would be served in the open. The boys gathered round the cook pots and dutch-oven and helped themselves to a generous amount of beans, potatoes, boiled beef, hot biscuits and coffee. Then sitting on the ground with legs crossed like a Turk's, used them for a table. Bill Smith, the cook, noticing "Me lord" standing with plate in hand, not seeming to know what to do next, told him to pitch in and help hisse'f, and if he couldn't, he better go home to his maw, 'cause they never car-

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ried no "bottles" along, 'twas so seldom they had any babies in camp.

"When you are through your dinner, Me lord, you can go and take charge of the horses and send the fellow that's herding them in to dinner," the Boss told him. He left camp with head a little lower than when he rode in. On reaching the horses he was saluted with "How'dy, pard?"

"I'm no pard of yours," he answered rather sullenly.

"I'm mighty glad on't old man, but you better get off your high horse if you expect to stay with the round-up." Then wheeling his horse around, the grinning old puncher galloped off to camp.

When he had been about an hour alone, Me lord started after a few of the horses that had strayed a little away from the rest, and stuck his spurs into his own steed to hurry him along, when down went his head, and up went Me lord, then down went Me lord and up went the steed. The first thought that flashed through his "unsettled" mind was fear that he might be seen by some of the boys from the camp, for he was choking the saddle horn unmercifully and had lost his hat and also his reins. Right into the bunch that fool horse went, scattering the frightened herd in all directions. Straight for camp they headed, his own horse in the very middle. He could do nothing

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to stop him for he had no reins. Just before reaching the camp they turned and started the other way. Tom Horn seeing him in the midst of the bunch, like a flash realizing what had happened, jumped on his horse and started in pursuit. Just before Tom reached him he released his grip on the horn and was riding along dejectedly when Tom seized his reins and led him into camp, turned him over to the boys, and went back to help Fuzzy and Uncle Sammy gather the badly scattered horses.

After the horses were gathered, and turned over to the "night hawk," the three punchers came back and demanded that Me lord be tried in Kangaroo Court, according to the laws of the Twenty-one round-up, which were as follows :

Offense No. 1: Getting thrown from bucking
bronch making less than five jumps.

Penalty: Twenty strokes with chaps and hair clipped tight to head.

Offense No. 2: Pulling leather on bucking bronch.

Penalty: Hanging from wagon tongue or
any suitable place.

Offense No. 3: Beating bronchs.

Penalty: Twenty-five strokes with chaps and
soused in creek.

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Offense No. 4: Cussing during chuck hours.

Penalty: Prisoner must be placed across rolled bed and given twenty-five strokes with chaps.

Offense No. 5: Wearing dirty clothes.

Penalty: Twenty strokes with chaps.

Offense No. 6: Wearing ragged clothes.

Penalty: Fifteen strokes with chaps.

Offense No. 7: Kicking about chuck or water.

Penalty: Ten strokes with six-shooter belt.

Offense No. 8: Snoozing after being called to stand guard.

Penalty: Take place of night-hawk two nights.

Offense No. 9: Going to sleep on herd.

Penalty: Tied to wagon wheel or tree in standing position six hours.

Offense No. 10: Riding in bed-wagon when not positively disabled.

Penalty: Ten strokes with six-shooter belt and forced to eat tablespoonful axle-grease.

Ben Pozey was selected to assume the part of judge because he was foreman for Jake Mill, the owner of the range they were then on, and where the *terrible* crime had been committed. The prisoner was allowed

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to choose three of the jurors and an attorney to defend him. With defiance in his eye, he selected his defender who was none other than Uncle Sammy. To serve as jurors he asked Geo. Hill, Bob Jurden, and Roy Cassidy. The judge told Jib Moore, (a bright youth whose father was the owner of extensive cattle interests near Douglas) he was to act as attorney for the prosecution. He took Oliver Lawrence, Harry Stanley and Cody Shippen for the three other jurors while Tom Horn was unanimously chosen as "sheriff." Rolled up camp beds were brought forth in order to be used as seats, and the trial of the tender-foot began. Everyone was sworn "in" or "out" whichever happened to suit the judge.

"Curley Jensen, alias Me lord, you are hawled afore this bunch accused of the crime of gripping the saddle horn with both hands," began the judge. "This, young feller, is one of the most cowardly acts a cow-puncher can be accused of, so you don't need to think you will be promoted or fed on peaches, and cow's cream. But I'm hopin' we won't have to feed your carcass to the wolves an' the eagles. Fire away, Jib, the court's all set an' awaitin' for you."

Jib took his place and called the witnesses, making them take an oath to tell the truth and only the truth, etc.

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"Fuzzy, tell what you know about the case. Do you know this man?"

"Yes."

"How long have you known him?"

"About twenty-four hours."

"Where did you first see him?"

"On twenty-mile divide."

"Was he riding?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a horse?"

"Big horse called Brown Sugar."

"Would you consider him a good rider?"

"No. He is too much afraid."

"Why do you think he is afraid?"

"Cause he kept one mit on the saddle horn all the time."

"Did you see him commit the crime he is now being tried for?"

"Well I'd tell a man."

"What horse was he riding?"

"He were tryin' to ride 'Dam'd—if—I—do.'"

"What is that horse branded?"

"He's a Twenty-one."

"That's enough, Fuzzy. I'll let Sammy see if you follow Geo. Washington's or Bill Nye's tracks," with which Sammy asked:

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"Do you know the defendant?"

"Slightly."

"How long does it take you to size a man up?"

"Oh! From one to twenty-four hours."

"Do you think he was doing his best at riding that horse?"

"If you call choking the saddle-horn with both fists, dropping the reins, and losing both stirrups, doing your best—yes."

"What was the color of the horse you saw him ride?"

"On twenty-mile or here?"

"Here."

"Black."

"I am through with you."

The judge dismissed him and ordered Happy Hoolegan brought forward.

"Happy," said Jib, "do you solemnly swear't?"

"I'll be hanged if I know if I ever swore that-a-way or not, but I swear mighty rank, once't in a while."

"Do you swear to tell the truth about the prisoner?"

"Yes; dam'd if I don't."

"Do you know this man?"

"Slightly."

"What do you know of him as a rider?"

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"I know that if he could hold their heads up as well as he can his own, he could stay a long time."

"Do you think he had any show to ride the horse that run into the cavey?"

"Sure."

"Do you know the horse he rode?"

"Yes."

"Describe him."

"What's the use? Every feller here knows 'Dam'd—if—I—do'—even Me lord."

"Do you know this man Jensen?"

"Made his acquaintance same time you did."

"Don't you think you are going pretty strong when you say you are 'sure' he had a chance to ride the horse that ran into the cavey?"

"No."

"Why?"

"'Cause anyone that can saddle a bronch, can ride that one, long's he don't try to force him into the water, but no puncher in this here camp can ride him through a river."

"Would you swear that he pulled leather?"

"I'll stay with it, swearin' or cussin'!"

With that, the judge dismissed him.

"Mr. Sheriff, bring in Upton Poolman."

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"Say feller, raise your mit and swear you will tell nothing but the truth."

"Can't do it, Boss, 'less you tell me what you goin' to ask me 'bout."

"Why, about Me lord, of course."

"All right; I promise; fire away."

"Do you know this man?"

"A short time."

"Did you ever see him ride?"

"I did."

"Where?"

"Over yondah 'cross the creek."

"How was he ridin'?"

"On a horse."

"What horse?"

"Dynamite."

"Describe him."

"He's a large dark horse, branded with a fiddle-back, on his left shoulder."

"Would you call the defendant a good rider?"

"No, he is too much of a farmer."

"Why do you think he is too much of a farmer to ride?"

"He's got big hands and feet and sits all over the horse at once."

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"Did you see him when he held the saddle horn in the cavey?"

"I saw him ride but did not see him hang to saddle-horn."

"I am through with you. Jib, you can have him."

"Did you see the defendant when he rode into cavey on 'Dam'd—if—I—do'?"

"I did."

"You say you did not see him holding saddle-horn?"

"No."

"Did you see him drop his reins?"

"Yes."

"Why did he drop them?"

"Could not say as to that."

"Would you drop your reins under same conditions?"

"Hardly."

"That's all."

The judge dismissed him and ordered High-stepper who refused to come and was forced at the point of a 45 Colts, to obey the order of the court. He was sworn in and Sammy began to fire the questions.

"High-stepper, do you know the prisoner?"

"Not much."

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"Did you see him ride just after dinner when his horse scattered the cavey?"

"I did."

"Did he lose his stirrups?"

"Yes."

"Both?"

"Yes."

"Did he seem frightened?"

"Scared like a wild bronch, with a saddle under his belly."

"Did he have hold of the saddle-horn with both hands when you saw him?"

"He had hold with one hand, but am dead sure he never had with two."

"Why are you so sure?"

"'Cause I never seen no saddle-horn big enough to hold two front paws like them."

"Do you think he could ride if he had the nerve?"

"Don't think he will ever have the nerve."

"What makes you think he will never have the nerve?"

"Did you ever see a feller with yeller boots and long shanked spurs that could stay till the cayuse got enough?"

"That will do High-stepper, for my part; pard let Jib get a whack at you now."

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"Did you see this man when he lost his stirrups?" asked Jib.

"I did."

"Were you on the left or right side of him?"

"Right side."

"If you were on right side, how could you see that he lost his left stirrup?"

"Don't remember."

"You better strengthen that memory of yours with a little bitters or we might have occasion to hold another session of this here court."

"High-stepper, you are excused," said the solemn faced Judge. Then turning to the prosecuting attorney he told him to hurry along with his little "say-so."

Jib stood up, took off his hat, threw it on the ground, planted his foot on the rim, to keep the wind from carrying it away, and scratching his head vigorously, began.

"Gentlemen of the jury: You have all heard the evidence, and you all know the West hates a coward. We have no room for him. We don't want men that will let a horse-brute go one better than him, for they wa'nt made to out-wit or out-do a human. There are heaps of places where a man don't need no sand—behind the plow, where all they have to do is keep steady

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and keep going, or behind a counter measuring ribbon and looking pretty. We hain't got room out here for fellers that hides their heads when they see a few flashes of lightning, and hollers "Ma!" when they hear a gray wolf howl. If our fathers had been of that breed, the West would never been discovered; they couldn't have faced the Reds." Then bowing to the judge he sat down.

Sammy had nothing to say, so the judge told the Jury they knew what the law on the 21 round up was, regarding the "pulling of leather," beating bronchs, etc., so they could take themselves over the creek-bank and decide their verdict. They returned in fifteen minutes with a verdict of guilty, and in favor of hanging. Judge Posey rose to his feet, and after clearing his throat, announced:

"Curley Jensen, you are found guilty of pulling leather on a horse called 'Dam'd—if—I—do,' belonging to the 21 outfit. The only sentence for such a crime, known to this court, is death, by hanging. The written law is strict, but the unwritten law knows no clemency. Mr. Sheriff, take your prisoner to that tree that has the limb sticking out to the bank of the creek."

With white face and uneven step, Me lord marched in front of a 45 calibre gun. A hangman's knot was

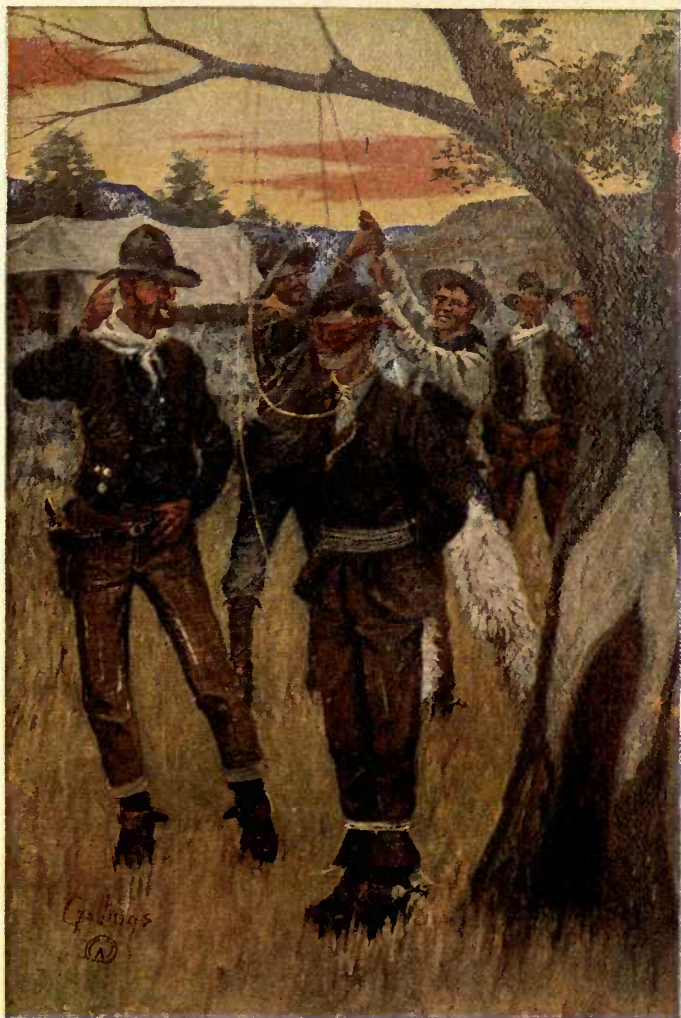
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made in a saddle-rope and placed around his neck, the other end thrown over a limb and a handkerchief placed over his eyes.

"Have you anything to say?" he was asked. After he told them he had not, he felt his hands being tied behind his back, and something being drawn tight around his waist—he supposed to keep his hands down. He now heard Tom Horn tell them when he said three, to pull hard.

"I will not give them the satisfaction of weakening," he thought, "even if I did play coward on that horse!"

Then he heard: "One, two," and the shivers ran all through him. He had scarcely had time to hear the three, when he found himself high in the air. But how was this? The rope was not tight on his throat. His hands and feet were free, and taking the bandage from his eyes, he saw he was suspended by his waist, a cinch being placed around him and a rope put through it was fastened to the limb, while the one around his neck was quite loose. Try as he would, he could not unfasten rope or cinch. It was getting very dark now, and had been very quiet, since the word "three" was spoken by Horn. How long he hung there he could not say, but was sure it must be hours when he felt himself being lowered slowly to the



Then he heard: "One, two!"

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ground. No one spoke to him and he could see no one, but he asked no questions. He had just succeeded in removing rope and cinch when the rain came pattering down. Moving slowly he found his bed, and crawled in, and was planning revenge for such a hideous joke, when a soft hand touched his face, and after finding his hand, placed in it a biscuit, and a piece of meat. In the other, a cup of coffee that was still fairly warm. He tried to reach for the hand of the man that had befriended him but only succeeded in touching the back of the quickly withdrawn member,—not quick enough, however, to keep him from discovering that a ring was worn on the little finger.

Morning found the Tenderfoot up before the others, and with determination in every move, saddling 'Dam—if—I—do,' the brute that caused his downfall. Gathering the reins in his hand, he confided to the bronch, "I'll ride you straight-up or start for home to-morrow." He had scarcely touched the saddle, when down went that bronch's head, and he made straight for the sleeping punchers, who, hearing the noise, jumped to their feet, and in the drizzling rain, without their outer garments, gazed in wonder at the man they had left hanging to the tree the night before.

He did not seem to see them, but plied quirt and

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spurs, with those powerful feet and hands, till "Dam—if—I—do" gave up completely, and stood with head down appearing as dejected as his rider had, the night before. Me lord turned to the boys and after removing his hat, said :

"Boys, I thank you, for if you had not done it, I should have been a coward all my life."

"Boys," said Judge Posey, "let us change the verdict to 'Not Guilty' and give three cheers for the Boston Tenderfoot."

And amid this gladsome sound, he rode away to relieve the night-hawk.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAS. LESLIE, JR.

Great had been the anxiety in the little town home of the Leslies, for the stork had visited there and left a son. But since his arrival, three days before, the shades had been down, and all stepped lightly that they might not disturb the little mother who still hovered between life and death. She had fallen in a quiet sleep now, and her watchers scarcely moved, fearing they might awaken her from the rest which they hoped would prove the turning point for the better.

Charles Leslie sat with bowed head thinking how dreary life would be without his cheerful little wife who had grown so very dear to him. Then he thought of the little one that had come to them. How glad she would be to know it was a son for she had wished for a sturdy little boy. Moving cautiously, he went into the next room where the tiny babe lay sleeping. In his great concern for the mother he had nearly forgotten the baby. It was the first very small baby

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he had ever seen, and as he looked, he realized how very much it was in need of his fatherly care, and protection.

The baby opened its big blue eyes and looked at him so trustingly he half believed that it knew him; he had never known that a new baby could be so interesting, and as he watched he began to plan for the future, when he heard a feeble voice calling his name. It was his wife and going quickly to her, he kissed her and said:

"You must get strong and well, little mother, for we have a fine boy."

"I am so happy, Charles, but tell me, does he look like you? I do so want him to for I want him to have your name."

"If you will be very quiet and not tire yourself, I will bring him for you to judge."

He picked the baby up gingerly and carrying it on his upturned palms, at arms' length, walked very carefully back to his wife and placed it beside her, tenderly. She looked long and earnestly, then with tear-dimmed eyes, said:

"He is all that I could wish."

With her baby close to her, and her husband holding her hand, she was presently in a peaceful sleep, from which she did not awaken for many long hours,

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and the anxious ones knew the great danger was over.

* * * *

Sunshine had been out giving Charles Jr. a little fresh air, for he was now four weeks' old and she told Mrs. Leslie she thought him quite old enough to learn the benefit of pure fresh air. On her return to the house, Mr. Leslie told her they had good news.

"I have just received a letter from Jack, and the doctor has finally consented to his coming home,—he expects to be here to-morrow."

The train from Hot Springs would arrive about eleven, and a close observer could have seen that Sunshine had been a little more careful than usual with her toilet. The customary shirt-waist and dark skirt was put aside, and a very dainty light-blue lawn with its daintier trimmings of white lace, was donned. As the time for the train drew near, Miss Golden sought the seclusion of her room, that the telltale tremor of happy anticipation might not be noticed by the others.

Charles Leslie went to the station to meet Jack, and after the usual greeting, told him a new foreman had just arrived, and he would be happy to introduce them, when they reached the house. Jack stopped and setting his traveling bag down, looked into the face of the Boss:

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"I am sorry I have not succeeded in pleasing you, and if you are no longer in need of my services, I will go back to the hotel."

Instead of the disappointed, grieved countenance Jack had expected to see, the Boss wore a broad grin, and taking him by the arm, said:

"Come, don't decide so quickly, for I'm positive you will change your mind when you have seen for yourself; besides I had instructions from Mrs. Leslie and Sunshine to bring you to the house."

That decided it; if Sunshine had wished it he would go but he wore a very dejected air. On reaching the house he was greeted in the usual manner by the ladies, while Mr. Leslie disappeared. Returning very soon with Charles Jr., he introduced him to Jack. It was Jack who laughed heartily, this time, and taking his hat off to the new "foreman," acknowledged, "that it was one on him."

"Jack," said Mrs. Leslie, "don't you think he looks like his father?"

"Well, ma'am, he's got the same kind o' eyes, but I can't say I can see much resemblance between that baby an' a full grown man," at which Mrs. Leslie laughed, as did the others.

The baby began crying and Charles Leslie, thinking the little one had been hurt by his awkwardness, gave

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him to his mother, telling her to see if he was not injured. She assured him he was unhurt, but very sleepy. Jack sat watching the devoted mother rocking and singing, as she held her treasure close to her, till he fell asleep; and as she placed him in his little crib, he said, with his eyes still on the baby:

"You get the right kind o' lookin' after, little feller; 'taint like that poor little maverick got I saw at the Springs." Then turning to the others: "I used to think 'twas only men who was heartless, but I know now there is many women, too, but a heartless mother beats 'em all. It is worse than the brute-kind, for they always care for their little ones. I was standing on the depot platform at the Springs, watching the people hop off the evening train from the East, and of those I noted, was a high-toned dude with a champagne nose, a claw-hammer coat and a candy box hat, a painted, puffy blonde with dipped, buckskin hair, an innocent, dainty, young girl, and half drunk nurse with a poor crying kid that I took to be about a yearlin'. I got mighty curious to know who such a mixed layout might be. They did not seem to know just where they wanted to go, so I stepped up to the dude to tell him about the hotels, an' boardin' places, but (Jack stopped and fairly shook with laughter) when that little innocent beauty caught sight of me,

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she just screamed and put both hands up to her face, and running to the buckskin blonde, said :

"Oh, Flossy, it is a cowboy; please take me somewhere; I'm so afraid he'll shoot us."

"'Miss,' says I, 'you and the kid are the last ones in this here layout I would ever pull a trigger on. I was only goin' to tell you where you could find proper accommodations.'"

"'I suppose,' said the dude, with his rosebud nose in the air, 'your intentions were to frighten these ladies for amusement, but I am here to protect them and I shall call a policeman at once if you do not cease your annoyance.'"

"What did you say to the cowardly coyote?" asked Mr. Leslie.

"I did not answer him. I called a cab and told the women folks to climb in, and they did, the buckskin blonde telling the nurse to sit outside with that little kid; but I changed that programme mighty quick. After I had them inside, I climbed up with the driver, and told him to go to the Evans, and not be slow. When he pulled up in front of the hotel, I opened the door and asked them if they were particular as to price. They told me they were not, so I told them to pile out.

"'Where is the count?' asked the blonde.

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" 'The who?'

" 'The count.'

" 'If you mean the stuffed suit of clothes with a window-glass over one eye, I left it back there at the depot, and I hope it falls in the creek and waits for me to fish it out. But never mind the "count." Get yourselves into the hotel so that poor little kid can get warm and get something to eat. I can't stand that crying. It's either hungry or sick.'

"She (the blonde) grabbed the little feller and began to shake him, but I grabbed that old sister and the hairpins flew in all directions. When I got tired, I took the kid from the girl to whom I had given it, and marshaled the bunch into the hotel. I told them I would see them next day and went to my room. I thought they would raise a fuss in the hotel but they didn't."

"Have you seen them since?" asked Sunshine.

"Yes—two days later I was just returning from the wind cave, which is about twelve miles from the Springs, tired and hungry, and as I started up the steps I heard someone calling, 'Mr. Cowboy!' and looking up saw it was my party of two days before. And they were calling me. I went to them and saw the 'Count' had found them. They were playing cards. A sort of introduction was gone through with,

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and they asked me to join them, but I refused after noticing how worried and disgusted the young girl looked. I also noticed the Count and the blonde were very much under the influence of liquor, four bottles of which stood in an ice pail beside them, and two full glasses of wine before them. To get her away from the disgraceful pair, I asked the young girl if she would not take me to see the baby. She consented and seemed very much relieved to get away.

"When we were out of hearing of the others, I said to the young lady, whose name I found out from the blonde, was Daisy Kilbourn, 'Why are you with such people?' and she began to cry and told me she had come for the baby's sake.

" 'I believe you are my friend and I can tell you. I could not tell the father she is cruel to the baby and this was the only way to help the poor little fellow.'

"When we came to the room used as a nursery, we heard the baby crying pitifully; we opened the door hurriedly, and just in time to see a bottle half full of sour milk flying in the air and land on the baby's shoulder, causing him to scream with pain. Daisy picked the baby up and tried to comfort him while I settled the half tipsy nurse. I am satisfied she could not be coaxed into marrying a cowpuncher or coming West again if she is ever permitted to get back East.

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I took the kid while Daisy went in search of milk for him, that didn't come by the chunk. She soon returned and that poor little maverick acted like he was starved. When she gathered a few duds together, I ordered a cab round to the side of the hotel and we got away with the baby, without anyone noticing. When we left, I told the nurse she must be mum or I would cause her trouble and she played her part all O. K. I took Daisy and the kid to a private boarding house where a good motherly woman lived, and I told her all and she consented to keep them dark till the father of the baby came. I sent that father a red-hot message. Then I went to the proper authorities and told them everything. They are mostly family men and told me to go on as though nothing had happened until the father came.

"The third day the father arrived. Daisy described him to me, and I met him at the train and took him at once to Daisy and the baby, and we told him how his innocent boy had been made to suffer. He cried bitterly, and after thanking us both, many times, he asked me to show him to his wife. I do not know what passed between them, but I went to the depot that eve to bid Daisy and him and the baby good-bye. He had secured a neat, smiling nurse, and as I said

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good-bye to the baby's father he said he was through with his wife for all time."

"Why was Daisy so interested in the baby?" asked Sunshine.

"I cannot say, but I rather guess she had loved the father before his marriage to the blonde who looked very much older than he. I asked the clerk at the hotel what become of the Count and the blonde. He said they were asked to leave the Evans and they had left town on the Black Hills train." Having finished his story, Mr. Leslie said:

"Are you able to ride to the ranch, Jack?"

"Sure."

"Then you can go out to-morrow and come back the next day with the double buggy, and send Brownie, or one of the others with the wagon, and we will all go back."

A few happy days with Miss Golden, and Jack felt he must be in the saddle helping the boys on the round-up.

CHAPTER X.

THE HANGING OF DIAMOND L. SLIM.

The rain had been falling pretty steadily for two days and nights and the boys were huddled under a tarp stretched over a pole, tent fashion, while a bright fire burned just outside to dry their drenched clothing. Everyone seemed on the mum order in the rather close quarters of the improvised tent. Not a man had spoken a word for nearly an hour when old one-eyed Peter broke into a hearty laugh.

"These big rains," said he, "make me think of the Spring '84 when we had one big round-up that would make this look like a mighty small affair. We was gathered at the old toll bridge called Sidney Bridge, about one hundred miles from old Fort Laramie. The Wyoming and Nebraska round-ups met there, the Nebraska wagons turning back from this point, and taking their cattle with 'em and sending reps. with the Wyoming outfits. 'Twas there the old stage going from Sidney to the Black Hills, crossed the Platte.

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An' many are the bottles of cheer it has carried to the little sod saloon on the north side of the river. Four round-ups started from there that Spring—five hundred of us punchers and four thousand saddle horses. I tell you fellers, that was the time to see your 'Wild West.' A man could see all the bronch pitchin' an' buckin' he wanted to.

"It had bin a rainin' like blazes, and I went in the sod saloon to dry out, and sittin' at a table playin' a little social game o' cards, was a bunch of mighty good fellers, and when I say good fellers, I don't mean something out of the trash pile like me. Some of 'em you know, and if you know 'em, you know 'em for good punchers. There was Laughlin, Chamberlin, St. Clare, Woody, Snyder and Dehart. Some of them had taken a little to get rid of the chill, and one what wasn't used to it, got a trifle upset in his stomach, and went out. He was staying some, so I thought I'd go and see what was wrong. He was standin' behind that sod shanty with his fingers jabbed deep into that wet mud, an' the longer he stood, the weaker his knees got, till they finally failed him and he was down on all fours, both hands gripped full of that 'ere sod an' eight deep trenches his fingers made as he went down. I laughed till I got tired, then I asked him what was the matter. When he got

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it all up he looked at me like a dying calf an' says: 'Pete, you old Sweede, 'taint 'cause I don't like it—it's 'cause I can't keep the dam'd stuff.' We certainly had excitin' times that Spring."

"Pete, you are sure a straight-faced liar for a Swede; you must think we are all tenderfeet giving us such gaff," spoke up Jack.

"Jack, that there is straight goods."

"Some of the outfits were the Goose Egg, Hawk Eye, Ty, Four J, Four P, XH, W. H. Bar, J. M., P.F., Seven Up, Seven U, Heart, Thirty-three Bar, Flying O, Seventy-seven, V Five Bar, L. Z., Node, C. R., T-7, Three Nine, Nine H Six, J. A., O Four, Half Diamond E, O. S. O., Keystone, Duck Bar, S. O. S., Diamond A, H. R., T. H., Bridle Bit, O Bar O, Half Circle Block, Italic H, Umbrella, and Trowel. These are all I can remember Jack, but if you send to Cheyenne and get the state paper that gives the working of the round-ups for '84 in it, you will find the rest."

"She's all ready," howled the cook, interrupting at this period, and they were soon busy satisfying the inner man at supper.

The first clear morning after two days and nights of steady downpour, found the boys up early, for they knew the creeks would be high, consequently they would encounter great difficulty in getting the stock

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across. The drivers were well used to handling the reins of a four horse team, but it took much persuasion, loud oaths and vigorous use of a long raw-hide to cheer the horses in the task of landing the wagons on the opposite side of the first creek which the rain had transformed into a roaring torrent.

Me lord the "horse jingler" had little trouble in getting the saddle horses over; a few of the older, experienced ones, taking the lead, the others soon followed. But no such good luck with the cattle. After three hours steady millin' the boys cut off a few and literally crowded them over the bank into the water; the rest seeing them in the stream followed and the water was soon filled with swimming cattle. Me lord seeing the trouble the boys were having, put his horses on good feed and went back to help them, but now as the boys started across, he hung back, for Tom Horn was riding Dam'd—if—I—do, and he remembered what they had said about him the day he was initiated into the outfit. Tom had scarcely gotten into the water when Dam'd—if—I—do reared up and pawing the air, fell backward into the seething, foaming stream.

Like a flash Me lord threw off his coat, and plunged in to the aid of the man who had befriended him on his first memorable night in the Twenty-one Camp.

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When the others realized what had happened, coats were peeled off, but just then two heads came to the surface some distance down stream. All rushed in that direction and when next they came to the surface, it was close to the bank and they were quickly hauled in by friendly hands. Tom's right foot had caught in the stirrup, and had it not been for Me lord's timely aid, he would have drowned. Fortunately he escaped with a badly wrenched ankle and a "big" fill of muddy water. Me lord came out of the fracas with a slight scalp wound, and the loss of his hat, which he forgot to remove before going into the water.

Dam'd—if—I—do managed to struggle out of the swift current, and now stood on the bank looking rather dejected, but conqueror of the man who would dare to force him through a stream, and had once more reasserted the right to his title.

The boys had scarcely got into camp on Big Lightning that night when a man rode in who was greeted friendly by nearly everyone.

"How far have you come to-day, Sox?" asked one of the boys noticing his horse was about all in.

"I came from the Stone pens on Lodge Pole, and I came in a hurry. I wanted to ask you fellers, if you'd like to be in on dealin' a little justice to a feller what ought to been in hell six months ago and saved

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the lives of two mighty fine young folks what he has brutally butchered on his place, the Diamond L ranch, to get out of payin' some money back, he spent of theirs."

Some were about to speak when Jack stepped to the front saying:

"Boys, don't commit yourselves, but when it comes dark we will make the cavey out a little farther and anyone what wants to go can catch him a horse and leave when he sees fit; but first think well what you're about to do; remember it'll be taking a human life. If you should be called to face a judge and jury for the puttin' out o' this feller's light, will you be able to stand there like men or slink away like sneakin' coyotes and deny you helped to deal justice to this dam'd cur who would raise a gun on a defenseless tenderfoot sayin' nothin' of a innocent, gentle, kindly, woman," and he turned and walked toward the cavey.

On the creek called Lodge Pole are some stone pens which are about forty miles Southwest of Newcastle. Three of the big outfits were now working the country in the vicinity of the pens. The Fiddle-back, the T-7 and the D.

Many a cold, hungry cowpuncher had been warmed and fed by the hospitality of the friendly young couple who lay cold in death wrought by the hand of the

THE HANGING OF DIAMOND L. SLIM

man called Diamond L. Slim, at present awaiting trial at the Newcastle jail. A strict guard had been kept over the doomed fiend for Sheriff Miller feared when the boys got together on the round-ups, they could not await the slowness of the law to avenge the murder of the two who had befriended so many of them. Well did he know that Slim deserved the treatment he would receive from the cowpunchers could they but get their hands on him.

The night following Sox's arrival at the camp on Big Lightning, Newcastle awoke to the fact that inside their little city all was not quiet and peaceful as usual. Many of the citizens looking from their windows or doors found everything in total darkness and any who stepped out to investigate, was ordered quietly but sternly to go in again, which he invariably did. Recourse to the telephone or an attempt to turn on electric lights disclosed the fact that both were temporarily out of commission. The door of the sheriff's home had been battered down when he refused to give up his keys to the jail. The keys were finally secured, and the sheriff taken out on a hill and guarded until that which the men had come for, had been accomplished.

Next morning's evidence of the midnight visitors was a long battering ram, a demoralized jail door, an

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empty cell and many tracks leading to a railroad bridge at the edge of town on the west side, where a piece of rope dangled from the two by six that formed the top of the railing over the body and severed head of Diamond L. Slim which lay on the bank of the stream some thirty feet below. No clues were ever found except the tracks of many feet in the vicinity of the jail and bridge.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERIOUS BRAND.

How fresh the air seemed to Jack Randolph, as he galloped, mile after mile through the pasture after the saddle horses. How green the cotton woods looked along the creek, and how fresh the pines on the hills smelled!

Nature seemed very cheerful to the cowboy since his return to the ranch, having been confined between the four walls of a building for so many weeks. After hunting for hours, he found a break in the fence where the horses had gone out, and followed their tracks up into the hills. Going a short distance, the tracks scattered out. When he was nearly through the timber on the Old Woman Creek side, chancing to look over the bank into the head of a washout, he thought he saw smoke, and dismounting, crawled down the steep bank to investigate. What he found, was the smouldering embers of a recent fire, beside which lay a small iron ring, and two small sticks with charred

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ends. He had always lived in the cow country and knew well what he had just seen meant that someone had been branding early that morning, but he could not imagine who that someone could be. It was on the JA6 range but none of the boys were out early that morning, and everything that close, was always taken into the ranch and branded in the corral. Then again it was too far away from any of the neighboring ranches to be possible that anyone from one of them would be there branding so early in the morning.

Jack placed the ring and sticks as he had found them and climbing the bank, rode away to find the saddle horses. When he did find them they were in three separate bunches,—something quite unusual. He also found many had wire cuts as though they had been forced through the fence.

"You are two horses short," said Peddy, as Jack drove them into the corral. "Monte and Nigger should be in this bunch,—they were with them yesterday, down in the southeast corner of the pasture." After Jack told him where he had found them, and those that were cut were examined, they agreed that they had been crowded through the fence by someone who had taken out the two horses that were missing. Jack said nothing of what he had found in the hills, but resolved to keep a close watch.

THE MYSTERIOUS BRAND

"You are pretty good at remembering brands. Who owns the MX brand, Jack?" asked Harry.

"MX connected?"

"Yes—I never saw it till last Spring."

"I saw two small bunches of young stock carrying that brand last Spring and I bet I have asked twenty fellers where it belonged, and no one ever seemed to know, except Gambler Jim, who told me he seen that brand tuther side o' Caspar. Why, where did you see it, Harry?"

"Saw fifteen head, young stuff, other side of Lightning."

The two were sitting behind the shed, cow-puncher style, using their heels as stools, trying to figure out who could be the owner of the cattle branded MX and scattered over such a large scope of country.

"Who is that coming in from the north?" the foreman finally asked.

"It is Miss Golden; she left early this morning for Mr. Sheldon's and I suppose she is just getting back. She must be in an unusual hurry or something has happened to frighten or annoy her."

When she stopped, Jack was beside her.

"What has troubled you, Miss Golden?" he inquired as she dismounted.

"Who on this ranch is brute enough to fasten calves

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in a pen where they can get neither drink nor food, and leave them until they look as though they were starved?"

"Why do you think someone here is guilty, Miss Golden?"

"Because a JA6 cow stood outside the poles they had put up for a fence, bawling pitifully."

"Where are the calves?" he asked.

"I found a young antelope and was trying to rope it; I wanted it for a pet, and it ran up a gulch, and I followed thinking I could run it in some little side pocket and have a better chance to rope it, when suddenly we came to the end of the gulch, where a pole fence had been quickly built to keep the poor starving calves in."

"Harry, please saddle my horse and yours, if you care to go," said Jack. "Miss Golden can you tell me where that gulch is?"

"It is extremely rough country. You cross the prairie-dog flat, and then Spring draw. Just after you cross it to the west about half mile, there is a lone tree at the top of gulch or draw; follow the draw to its head and you will find the calves, but you'll hear them long before you get to them."

Harry now led the two horses out of the barn, and after Jack told Sunshine not to say anything of what

THE MYSTERIOUS BRAND

she had seen till they came back, and that he would then explain to her and the Leslies if he though best they should know, they rode away, not to return till the small hours of morning. Finding the draw described by Sunshine, and riding some distance toward the head, Jack asked Harry if he had his gun.

"Yes, why do you ask? We should have heard those calves before this."

He had time to say no more, for they had turned a bend in the draw and the improvised pen was before them, but the calves were gone. Jack got off his horse and examined the ground in and around the pen. "The calves were put in and taken out again by two men, one small the other large for there are two foot prints in here. The small man toes in badly."

At the last remark Harry gave a whistle but said nothing. They rode into a little side-draw and there found the JA6 cow, Sunshine had seen, with a bullet hole in her head. They found where the calves had been driven out of the draw, and followed the trail till they could no longer find tracks, and then made a circle north and west, with the hope of getting close enough to the calves to hear them bawl, and thus get a clue to the direction in which they were being taken; their ride availed them nothing, for they heard naught but the occasional "hoot, whoot," of an owl,

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and went back to the ranch to watch for the men whose boots would measure in length and width the space between the marks on Jack's bridle-reins taken from the foot prints in the soft sand of the calf pen.

Harry's camp-bed had been left outside and when they reached the ranch they retired in the fresh air and fell asleep gazing at the stars on the ceiling of their spacious bed-chamber. When morning came no one questioned them, for none but Sunshine knew they had gone and even she did not guess they had been out nearly all night following what they were now obliged to acknowledge, must have been "rustlers."

After they talked the circumstances over, they decided to say nothing until they found more positive evidence. All the boys except Zang and Tom O'Day were home from the round-ups and they were expected in, any time. They were eating breakfast when Brownie, who sat opposite the window, jumped up and ran to the door, and after looking eastward a few minutes, exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be dam'd; if Monte and Nigger ain't out by the corral and they're plum all in."

"Where did they come from?" asked Peddy.

"They come right down the west fence."

"Somebody's been ridin' them horses," said

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Brownie; "they better steer shy of the Boss when they use his best horses like that, or he might change their notion about wanting to ride 'em any more."

Breakfast over, the boys filed out to examine the two horses that had been missing from the pasture. Their appearances showed plainly that some brute or brutes had ridden them.

The horses were taken to water and seemed as much in need of it as they were of food and rest. Zang and Tom O'Day got into the ranch about noon from the Pool round-up and Tuberculer found the bunk-house a poor place for a tenderfoot when that noisy "bunch" of punchers gathered in there after supper for the news from the several round-ups.

CHAPTER XII.

TUBERCULER THE TENDERFOOT.

"Sammy," said Zang, "when did you get admitted to the bar?"

"What bar?"

"Why I heard over on the Pool round-up, you defended a tenderfoot in Kangaroo Court; how about it?"

"We initiated that fellow proper, for pulling leather, and he has turned out to be the best bear paw'd, elephant-footed bronch buster in the outfit," he answered, while the boys were gathered around a table, playing cards.

When Sammy was describing the hanging of Me lord, some one gave a groan. Everyone turned in the direction the groan had come from. Tuberculer sat on the edge of his bunk shaking like an aspen-leaf. Brownie kicked Buck Saffell under the table and after receiving an acknowledging wink from that fun-loving

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individual, he asked the boys if they had heard of the crazy sheepherder that had been seen on Lance Creek.

"I heard a feller tell about seeing him, and said he was carrying a rifle," said Buck, who now passed the kick to Hill.

"I heard say his eyes stick out, and he slobbers like a mad dog," added Hill.

"How far was he from here?" asked the now thoroughly frightened Tuberculer.

"About two miles," spoke up Buck.

Just then a large white face with big staring eyes looked in at the window, and after one horrified glance, Tuberculer dodged under his bunk. The mischievous wink was passed around and every one pretended to be frightened. All dodged out of sight of the window and in whispered tones, asked one another what was best to do.

"Let's take **our** guns and chase him away," suggested Brownie, "for if those eyes tell anything, he must have a fearful disposition."

"I have a scheme," said Sammy; "suppose two of us take a blanket and throw it over us; then if we stoop over a little, we will look like a cow, and we can go out and hunt around and see if it really is that crazy fellow. And if it is, we can come back and tell you; then you can go out and shoot him. You might leave

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one feller here so if he should try to come in, the feller in here can kill him. Put the light out you fools; he might be prowling around here this minute. Who will go with me under this comfort? It wants to be someone what haint got a gun 'cause every feller what has any fire-arms wants to be where he can use 'em."

"I'll go with you," said Tuberculer, crawling out from his hiding place.

"All right! I'll get under the front and watch, and you get under the back. Are you ready, kid?" sang out Sammy.

"Y-e-s, I guess I am."

"Open the door then, boys. Now if we find him we will come up here and bellow like a cow, and you fellows can come out and be sure to have your guns ready to shoot."

Down over the creek bank went Sammy, with Tuberculer stumbling and falling behind. When they came to a place where a draw ran into the creek from the north, someone shot. Tuberculer jumped the length of the comfort and dropping it, grabbed Sammy from behind, wound both arms around his neck and with chattering teeth and trembling voice, whined:

"Oh Sammy! They won't know where to find us, and he is shooting at us!"

"Don't you get so scared; I know what we can do;

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you sit down on the ground and I'll put the comfort over you and he will think you are a big rock or bush; I'll run to the bunk-house and get the boys."

"Do you really think he won't know it's me?"

"Of course he won't."

"Then please hurry, Sammy."

"It'll take a little time, kid, 'cause I'll have to crawl and sneak up around the corrals and barn, but don't you be so dam'd scared, kid; you can't die but on'ct."

"Do you think I might get killed now?"

"Aw a feller can't allus tell about that. Cowards mostly get killed first," and with the last consoling sentence he started for the bunk house to join the boys in their high glee.

"Where's the kid?" were the words that greeted him when he entered.

"Down in the draw behind the barn waiting for you fellers to come and save him. I wrapped him up good in the comfort so the crazy sheepherder would think it was a big rock or bush. Who done the shooting down there—Buck?"

"Yes, and I bet a ten you'll hear some more of it soon."

"He'll scare that kid out o' that comfort," said Hill.

He had scarcely gotten through speaking when two shots rang out in quick succession.

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"Come on, fellers, let's go and rescue him from that terrible crazy man!" and with a smothered laugh, they filed out to risk their lives for the tenderfoot.

The second shot brought Tuberculer from under the comfort, and with a scream of fright, at seeing his assailant within ten feet of him, he ran as he never had run before. When he got to the top of the bank the boys came running to him, and grabbing him on all sides ran with him to the bunk house, while several shots were fired at the supposed herder. When they got into the bunk house they braced themselves against the door and the bad man outside hammered there with his gun.

After everything was still and the herder had, supposedly, gone back to camp, Tuberculer crawled out from under the bed and was telling how terribly close the shots had been to him, when suddenly a face appeared at the window. Before anyone could stop him, Tuberculer grabbed a boot-jack and threw it through the window, then jumped back to his hiding-place under the bed like a scared jack-rabbit bouncing into his hole.

"I tell you what we will do," said Brownie. "Seeing that herder has such a 'murderous disposition' we'll all go out, and run him in here with our guns,

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till morning, and we'll sleep in our round-up beds outside."

This brought the kid out from under that bed, in a hurry.

"The kid here has no gun, so you and I, Sammy, will go out with him to the farthest bed and put him in before the herder comes back, and when he does come we'll fasten him in here till morning."

After they saw the kid in bed they pretended to have a terrible time putting Buck, the supposed herder, into the bunk house.

"What's your game, now?" asked Zang.

"I know where there's a dead rattle-snake," said Brownie, "and I'm going to put it on his pillow just before time for him to wake up. I'll bet he gets up the quickest this morning, even if he never has before."

When daylight was just breaking through the clouds in the far east, Brownie went tiptoeing around to wake all the boys but Tuberculer, so they could see the fun. He got the dead snake and very quietly coiled it on the bed close to Tuberculer's face. Then with two matches sharpened to a point, he stuck them into the skin under the snake's head, to hold him up so he would be looking into the kid's face. The kid's hand was close to where he coiled the snake, and to wake

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him he pricked him with a thorn of a cactus which leaves a sting like that of a bee.

With a terrific yell he jumped from bed and started for the house screaming, "I'm killed—I'm stung by a rattler!"

Before reaching there, however, he was held tightly and hurried to the creek where the boys threw water on him and spit tobacco juice on the sting to kill the poison; one tore his handkerchief and bandaged the wound. He was warned not to say anything to the ladies, of his unlucky night, as they would be so frightened. So with the look of a martyr, he went in to breakfast.

"What in the world was all the shooting for, last night?" asked Miss Golden as she sat on the corral fence watching the boys taming a few snorty bronchs.

"We was shootin' for the benefit of a 'cowardly coyote' what's been hanging around," said Sammy as he threw his rope at a bronch, and his glances at the kid who was looking between the poles of the corral at the performances within.

"What you got there?" Hill asked Brownie.

"A sinker," Brownie replied, as he came out in front of the corral with his lariat coiled in one end of which was a loop, and on the other, a good-sized biscuit was fastened.

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"What you going to do with that?" asked Sunshine.

"I'm going to put this rope round the cook's neck and throw him in the creek."

And amid shouts of hearty laughter he disappeared through the kitchen door, from which he shortly emerged with his face nicely powdered with flour.

"Fellers and ladies," he said, as he climbed on the corral fence, "gaze at me; I just came from the field of 'flowery experience.' I tell you, that cook has a mighty 'savage disposition.'"

"Kid," said Mr. Leslie, "you go after the mail. Be sure and not lose any of it, as I am expecting some important letters."

"All right, sir; what horse shall I ride?"

"Mrs. Leslie's pony, Billy. You need not ride him fast, as you will have plenty of time, and he is gentle; there will be no danger of your getting hurt."

Billy bridled and saddled, Tuberculer started on an easy gait for the mail. Mr. Leslie's letters he placed in his inside coat pocket to make them very safe, and putting the rest in a small bag, tied it to the saddle and started back for the ranch whistling a lively air. About half way between the mail box and the ranch was a very deep gulch that Tuberculer was obliged to cross, and as he neared it he ceased whistling for the thought of the crazy sheepherder came to him.

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"Suppose," thought Tuberculer, "he would be hid in that gulch and draw a gun on me and try and make me give him the mail? I will not do it for the Mrs. and Miss Golden as well as the others would have to know about that. I'm mighty glad to get through that gulch," he confided to Billy as he climbed up the bank onto the open prairie.

"Stop!" sang a voice from behind him, while a shot rang out.

"Oh, those letters!" thought the kid. "We can't stop—we must, must go," vigorously applying heels and quirt, but the man behind was fast gaining on him, and the shots sounded very close. "I know what I will do; I will drop the bag and keep the letters in my pocket."

While his trusty horse sped onward, he unfastened the bag and dropped it to the ground. When he reached the ranch and Mr. Leslie saw the condition of his horse, he was very angry, until Tuberculer told him of his awful experience, when he smiled and said, "I am glad you are improving, and I think we will find the other mail later."

About half an hour later Zang rode into the ranch, his horse dripping with sweat and "all-in" carrying the stolen mail bag.

"Where did you get it?" asked the kid.

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"From the crazy sheepherder," said Zang. "I run him down and took it from him."

"A likely story," said the kid, who seemed very cross and excited about something.

"Have your fun, Zang, but remember, the time for my fun is coming." Then while Zang laughed heartily, he went into the house a determined look on his usually good natured face. With the next order from town, a brand new six-gun and ten boxes of shells were brought for the "tenderfoot."

No one ever saw, or heard him shoot, but when he was sent any distance from the house a box of shells would be missing from the pile until nine had gone from the corral where but a short time ago ten had been placed.

One night a heavy shower drove the boys into the bunk house, and they sat around telling thrilling stories for the benefit of the tenderfoot. When it came to Zang's turn, he told of how he had to wrestle with the crazy sheepherder, to get possession of the mail-bag. After he had completed his story and turned to see the effect it had produced on Tuberculer, he rolled a cigarette. He had lighted it and was preparing to enjoy it, when the tenderfoot got up quietly, placed his back against the door and in calm even tones said:

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"Zang, take that cigarette out of your mouth and acknowledge you are a liar."

Everyone looked in wonder at the quiet, determined face of the tenderfoot.

"Don't get so brave you 'young pup'," snorted the angry Zang.

Tuberculer's eyes grew a little brighter, as his mouth drew a little tighter, but he quietly told Zang once more to take the cigarette from his mouth and do as he had told him, or he would be obliged to remove it for him.

"Try it, you dam'd little coward, and I will show you where you belong."

Like a flash the new gun came into sight, a shot rang out, and the cigarette left Zang's mouth. Everyone jumped to his feet.

"Boys," said Tuberculer, "clear the middle of the floor."

Without a word they obeyed, while Tuberculer kept the gun pointed at Zang, his tormenter. When the floor was cleared, he told the latter to get up and dance for the boys. Zang did not move but said, "What right have you to tell me I lied?"

"Because it was you who stole the mail bag," said the kid.

"Prove it."

TUBERCULER THE TENDERFOOT

Still holding the gun in his right hand, the kid drew from his pocket a red handkerchief in which a face had been cut, and held it up with his left hand so it could be seen by all in the room.

"This," said he, "you dropped from your pocket while pulling your tobacco out just after you handed the mail bag to the Boss, and he saw me pick it up; when you went into the barn I showed him these holes in it. I told you then my time for fun was coming, and it has come to-night, so get out there and dance for the boys."

"I can't," said Zang, and made no attempt to get up. Another shot rang out and the heel of Zang's boot disappeared. Like a flash he jumped to his feet and danced as he had never danced in his life, for he now knew the kid meant business. When his clothes were dripping with perspiration, the tenderfoot lowered his gun and demanded everyone in the room to come and shake hands with him, which means in "cowland" that no matter what has been the differences between two people, they are now friends.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RESISTING SIOUX.

"Go to sleep little one," said Florence Leslie to her baby son, for he seemed over wakeful, restless, and cross—almost as though he, like his mother, had a presentiment, for to-night Fate had played her a cruel trick. Through a misunderstanding, she, with her little boy, was alone for the first time since she came to the ranch a bride, and those who would have risked all, even life itself, were ignorant of the danger she was in, and of the terrible battle that had that day been fought between Eagle Feathers, (the Sioux Chief) and his followers, the Newcastle sheriff and his posse of trusty cowboys.

"Oh Charles, had you only known of this terrible, maddening, long, silent night when you left, we would then have been safe, and this fearful strain would have been avoided!"

Slim, the cook, she had let go to see if he might be of any service at the scene of the trouble, for she had

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fully expected her husband and his brother home that day, but through some misunderstanding, neither had arrived, and she sat alone except for the helpless little one and her only comfort, a gun, loaded and ready, should she need to use it. She had lighted no lamp fearing it might act as a guide, should some of the blood-thirsty Sioux chance to break away from the posse and take the accustomed trail back to the reservation.

"Suppose," she thought, "they would carry out the threat they made to Charles, last Spring?—when he had papers served on them for the same offense,—that of slaughtering game in great quantity, and after taking only the choicest parts of both deer and antelope, leaving the remainder to decay on the prairie."

The white man was not allowed such wasteful privileges, why then the redskins of another state? When Charles Leslie and a Lusk deputy sheriff, with the aid of one other man, attempted to arrest them, they simply told them they would not go and as the reds outnumbered the sheriff's party many times, they knew it would be worse than useless to try and force them. When the deputy sheriff had secured a large enough posse to take them, they had crossed the Dakota line and defied them with the word "Dakota" meaning of course, "We are beyond your reach." But when he

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had secured extradition papers, the posse again pursued them; they were not overtaken however, until they had reached the reservation, where the agent and authorities refused to give them up. The chief, after finding the name of the party who had pulled his gun, and gotten the drop on him for trying to break through the ranks, and who was no other than Charles Leslie, said :

“I will get even; he heap bad man.”

This remark or threat was the principal cause of Florence Leslie's alarm. The stillness was almost unbearable now for little Charles was sleeping and nothing broke the dead silence for an hour, when suddenly she heard a rushing sound from the direction of the draw behind the house, like that of many horses' feet, hurrying toward the Buck Creek hills.

Kissing her little son, with her gun cocked and gripped tightly in one hand, she crept to the door and opening it, slipped outside; after locking it, she walked close to the house on the darkest side, and crouching low, crept to the back of the bunk-house and stood in the shadow watching the top of the only path that lead up from the steep embankment.

How the minutes dragged! Several times she went back to see if her child were safe. The noise in the draw decreased, and seemed to be going east. A short

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distance below the house, the trail left the draw and came into the open flat, and after watching some time in that direction, she saw a string of dark objects come out of the draw and strike out at a rapid pace, in an easterly direction. She almost shouted for joy; she was satisfied now, for she felt the danger was over, and rested easily, with her little boy clasped in her arms.

When she awoke, the sun was streaming in through the window to which she quickly rushed and saw a fast approaching horse, the noise of whose hoof-beats had awakened her. It was her husband and he was riding at a fearful pace. When he came into the yard he rode up to the door instead of taking his horse to the barn as usual. After satisfying himself that his wife and babe were safe, his first question was:

"Where are Peddy and the boys?"

"I have not seen any of the boys except Slim, whom I sent to the fight; the others went to the beef round-up the day you left, and Peddy went with them intending to have been back yesterday, but he didn't come."

"Then who was here to take care of you and the little one?"

"No one," admitted Florence, with a tremor in her voice.

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"My God! You and that helpless child alone with those blood-thirsty devils fighting only twenty miles away, and their home trail almost in the door-yard? I cannot see why Peddy did not come. Why did you let Slim go?"

"I thought you or Peddy would be here."

"I would have, had I known you were alone. I would have reached here somehow, but a wrecked car on the main track detained us, and I knew nothing of immediately. Poor brave little mother," said Charles Leslie, after she told him of the anxious night she had passed. "Why could this not have happened when we were all here, and thus saved you this terrible experience! I will get the horses and take you to town where you will be safe until the Indians are either captured or taken back to the reservation."

When Charles Leslie was bringing the driving horses in from the pasture, he saw a man go out of sight in the draw that ran toward the house, and fearing it might be a stray Indian, he rode like mad, but on reaching there, found it to be Jack who had just come from the battle ground on Lightning, and was one of the number who had faced the fire of the red skins. Blood stains were still on his clothes, evidence of his care for the dead and wounded.

"Is it over or are they in need of help?" were the

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words with which Charles Leslie greeted him as he rode into the corral.

"It is all over, and some of the Indians were taken to Newcastle, some to Lusk, and the others that got away last night, are being pursued by a posse of men, who are hot on their trail, under a leader who will not stop short of their capture, unless they kill him as they did Miller, whose family of four children and wife will be obliged to struggle through the world without him. He was taken back to his home dead, as was Deputy Sheriff Faulkenburg, brought down by the bullets of the Sioux who have so many times threatened him. All I'm sorry for outside these two deaths, is that the Indian agent wasn't there so we could show him where to head in, for giving them Indians permission to come in this state to hunt where he's got no more sayso than you and me. He sure must have known what kind of trouble-maker that Carlisle Smith, or Chief Eagle Feathers was, and if he don't know anything about them Indians, I don't see what they got him there to look after them for. For my part, Charles, I consider the blood of an Indian the same if he's a Carlisle graduate, or a home grown Sioux, and the man that is put in charge of them should know something of state laws."

"What started the fight, Jack? Tell me about it."

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"Well, I was with the beef round-up and heard about the trouble, and that Miller was going after them, so hunted him up, and when I found him, he said:

" 'Jack, I'm tired of this business. I have written but they won't do anything at the Agency to stop them d. . . . n reds coming in here every year, and if a white man would do it he would quick be made to respect the laws. Congressman Mondell also wrote to the Department, but with no better results. I have tried to make a peaceable arrest of these Indians before, but my force was insufficient to compel my demands without great loss and I had to abandon it. Some fellows came in from the Cheyenne and Black Thunder Country about a week ago, and one of them said the Indians were raising hell out there again and asked me to come and stop it, so I am going.'

"Miller organized a posse of seven men and himself and started out. A few days afterwards they encountered some Indians near the A. U. 7. ranch, and Miller detailed one man of his posse to take them back to Newcastle. The main body of Indians was encountered at the 74 Pens on the Cheyenne River, and Miller served his warrant on them, and stayed about three hours in camp waiting for them to prepare for the trip to Newcastle, and they started, but when they

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reached the forks of the road, Smith, the educated Indian, took the Lance Creek road in the opposite direction to Newcastle, and when Miller tried to talk him into going to Newcastle, Smith said if he tried to force him he would kill all his men.

"Seeing the helpless condition he was in, Miller started for reinforcements and stayed at the Fiddle-back ranch that night. The next morning he started two men out to take the track of the Indians and to meet him at the Jake Mills Ranch. That night I joined them, and he succeeded in getting seven extra men. One of them was John Owens, the old-time scout. You know him, don't you, Charles?"

"Yes, and he is a brave, fearless fellow. He has faced death many times to my knowledge, and it was always for right."

"Well, to come back to the Indian trouble," said Jack, "the sheriff and ten men arrived at the Jake Mills ranch that evening as agreed, and had camped and prepared supper, and some of the men had eaten when the two scouts arrived and said the Indians were right on top of them and prepared for battle. The sheriff ordered his men to get their horses and go out and meet them. They saw them coming about a quarter of a mile away, and the Indians caught sight of the

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posse at the same time. Owens said to Miller: 'These Indians are going to fight.'

"Owens has not been on the prairie for forty years for nothing, and he knew what their actions meant. 'Miller, the first thing you know they will kill and wound some of your men and you will be whipped,' he said. You know, Charles, the Creek is dry along there."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, he told Miller to take his men and go down in the creek and keep them out of sight and he would stay on the bank till the Indians got close enough for Miller to talk to them, and he stood there till they were within fifty yards. Then he said: 'Miller, you are within fifty yards of them and I know by their actions they are going to fire on us. Do they know you?' 'Yes.' 'Then we will talk to them.' But Miller wanted to cut off six wagons that had quite a space between them and the other nine wagons. Owens said: 'No, they will fire on us,' but Miller insisted, and Owens went with him and that was when the fight commenced. Owens tried to talk the Indians out of fighting, and even after several shots had been fired he, without answering their fire, said: 'Now boys, none of that—we want to talk to you.' But it had no

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effect. We could all see now the red-skins meant business and it would be a case of fight. Pretty soon Miller fell and we got down to steady aiming, then most of the bullets took effect, and the Indians seeing their leader fall, and several of their men, became disorganized and fled. They had all the best of the ground and the setting sun shone in our eyes. We had all the worst of the natural position. Although taking them Sioux by force might not have been the wisest thing to do, we went out there with the intention of preventing any further breach of the law by them coyotes, and not with the intention of starting any fight, for I think most of the boys in the posse, like myself, had the idea that they would come peaceably but when they started it, we certainly did not intend to run.

“Sheriff Miller did everything possible as an officer, to avoid having any trouble with the Indians—even to exposing himself to all kinds of danger, and avoided any display or fancy airs; he done the square thing in the whole *fracus*. We tried to take them without trouble but we were there to do our duty and if nothing but shooting would do, we were ready.”

Everything was quiet as usual when the cowboys were away, and Mrs. Leslie had nearly forgotten her

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fright when one of the boys came home and brought the mail and of course all were anxious to see what the papers had to say of the fight on Lightning.

"Jack, what do you think of this?" said Charles Leslie. "This paper gives an account of the fight—it's anything but a true one; it lays the cause to the white men and says the posse was made up of toughs!"

"I would like to have that Indian agent here about now. I'd show him how tough I am, for I feel that it was he who gave that account of the affair," Jack answered, "and of course with the object of setting himself straight with the Department. Let them ask Congressman Mondell; he will say if the posse was made up of toughs or of honest citizens."

"Cheers for our governor!" said Mrs. Leslie, as she read from the *Denver Republican*, the following:

"Governor refuses to surrender Reds—Governor Chatterton appeals to South Dakota Governor to have fugitives sent to Wyoming.

"Cheyenne, Wyo.—4—Sheriff Neilson of Edgemont, telegraphed to-night the following to Governor Chatterton:

"Edgemont, So. Dak.,—F Chatterton, Governor, Cheyenne, Wyo.:

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"Have nine buck Indians; ask Governor of So. Dakota to have them delivered to Sheriff at Douglas. Agent wants to take them.'

(Signed) A. J. Neilson, Sheriff.

"Gov. Chatterton replied as follows:

A. J. Neilson, sheriff, Edgemont, S. D.

"Your telegram received. I have appealed to governor for delivery of Indians to sheriff of our (Converse) County.'

(Signed) F. Chatterton, Governor.

"Shortly after getting the telegram from the sheriff, the Governor received the following telegram:

"Edgement, S. D.—4—Governor Chatterton, Cheyenne, Wyo.

"From best information I can get the killing of seven Indians in Converse County last Saturday was totally unjustifiable. Indians were traveling on road with their families in wagons, when fired into by sheriff and posse. Ten Indians and their families under arrest here and held by order of sheriff of Converse County. To avoid any further trouble would recommend you order their release and allow them to return

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to agency. I will be responsible for them and after an investigation if any of them are wanted I will turn them over to the proper authorities. They were arrested in Dakota by one of your sheriffs.'

(Signed) J. R. Brennan,
U. S. Indian Agent.

"In answer to this the Governor telegraphed as follows:

"'Your telegram received. You cannot expect Wyoming to waive right to conduct investigation as to violation of its laws. The Supreme Court of the United States, in the Race Horse case, passed upon these rights. I would advise respect now, though late, for the state's rights. I must insist upon these Indians returning with the sheriff just as I would for the return of a white man charged with crime. My information regarding killing differs from yours, as stated. A legal investigation in my judgment is to the interest of your Indians.'

(Signed) F. Chatterton, Governor."

"I cannot see who would be such a falsifier as to give the agent such a statement," said Johnny.

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"Look in the *News*, Charles, and see if you can see any report from Prosecuting Attorney Mecum."

"Yes here it is"—after a short search.

"Special to the *News*, Cheyenne, Wyo.,—2—
'Information received by Governor Chatterton from Prosecuting Attorney Mecum of Converse Co. gives a different account of the first battle with the Sioux. Mecum visited the scene of the battle and made a personal investigation, returning to Douglas to-night. He says that Eagle Feather first opened fire, shooting Falkenburg through the heart. Black Kettle shot Sheriff Miller a moment later, and then the battle occurred. Eagle Feather was instantly killed as was also Black Kettle.'

"That is more like the truth," said Jack.

Word came later of the trial of the Sioux bucks, and after admitting that they were with the band on Lightning, they got out of their trouble nicely by laying all the blame on the Indians that were killed in the fight. "We killed no white men, dead Indians kill white men," they said, and were turned loose to laugh at the white men and their laws, as an extract from a letter written by Congressman Mondell to

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Secretary of Interior, Hon. E. A. Hitchcock, will show.

"I have heard that this party on return to the reservation was made much of; that no attempt was made by the authorities to impress on them the fact that they had been properly and legally fined for the violation of the laws of Wyoming; but on the contrary, that they were encouraged to believe that their arrest and imposition of a fine, was unwarranted and illegal."

Jack had gone back to the round-up after finding that he was not needed at the ranch, Mr. Leslie having returned and Sunshine (he was informed by Mrs. Leslie), had gone to Laramie to visit some relatives and was not expected back for some time.

When he heard this last, he jogged along toward the beef herd, reflecting on the sudden gloominess of the place.

The Leslies had just sat down to dinner when someone outside called. Mr. Leslie went to the door and found it was Slim, who said he had just left the boys with the beef herd on the Lance Creek divide.

"Jack wants to know if you have an order to ship the Bel Pre cattle, 'cause if you hain't, he wants to cut 'em out right away."

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"You can put your horse up, Slim, I will ride over there as soon as I have eaten my dinner. How are the Indians?"

"Why the dead ones and Miss Hope-Clear-Gray-Bear are all right, but the rest—ugh, no more Indian fights for me—the compliments for good cooking look better to me than the glories of a dead hero!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STAMPEDE.

"How's that for a bunch of grass beef steers?" Jack asked the Boss.

"They certainly do look well, Jack, and they will bring a good price if we can keep them quiet till we are ready to load them on the cars."

They were undoubtedly a pretty "bunch," with the exception of a very few off-colors. They were red with the clean white face invariably found in the Hereford all about the same size and age. One did not have to be an experienced butcher or packer, to know that such a bunch of steers would make good beef and would kill out profitably to the man looking for good killers, for they had breadth, depth and firmness.

"Peddy, we need not be ashamed of the JA6 brand showing up on them, in any market," said Charles Leslie to his brother who had just ridden up to in-

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spect the beeves; and with a smile of satisfaction he answered:

"You're right, providing they don't stampede and lose half their weight.

"I'm mighty glad there is plenty of fellers to stand guard to-night 'cause it looks a heap like a storm, and if we get electricity as well as rain these cattle will be hard to hold."

"Yes and when the boys of the other outfits get here with fresh cattle they will likely get mighty restless."

"Buck and myself with a couple of the Lance Creek boys will stand first guard, and Jack and Zang can stand on another guard, and that will give you fellows that were out so long last night, a chance to get a little more sleep," said Peddy. "There will be enough without them if the cattle don't stampede and if they do, a few can do as much as many if it is dark as it was last night."

The night and the storm advanced together. What was a light shower when the sun went down, by midnight was a blinding rain accompanied by crashing thunder and fiery lightning that danced hither and thither on the ears of the horses and the ears and horns of the cattle as they milled and bawled. The darkness was appalling, but the boys on guard thought

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only of the cattle as they went round and round. They knew well there would be dead cattle in the center of that herd but they could do nothing to stop them till daylight. As the first streaks appeared in the East, Harry, Tom and Charles Leslie came to relieve the wet, hungry boys who, but for Zang, were all in sight.

"Where is Zang?" asked the Boss.

"He is just over the bank to the right of the herd. Wanted a smoke, I expect, and I forbid the boys striking any matches around the herd," said Jack. "I will go and tell him you are with the steers so he can come on in with us." And so saying, Jack rode away in the direction of the bank over which he had said Zang had gone, and there he found just what he expected—Zang curled up under a big flat rock that extended out from the bank, sound asleep, his horse tied to a sage brush.

Jack untied his horse and calling him by name told him he could go to the camp and finish his "nap" as the new relief was with the herd, "But remember," said he, "you came over the bank a few minutes ago to smoke, do you understand?"

"Yes but I'll say what I damn please about my coming over here."

"As you like, but if you tell the truth don't forget

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that last night was a bad night for any four honest men to hold that bunch and you know how the West loves a 'coward and a sneak.'"

Zang reached for his gun but Jack rode up a little closer and said:

"You don't want to get me now; my friends up there are too close with that herd of restless beef steers; the sound of the shot would make them stampede. You better put that shooting-iron away till a later date."

"Curse you—I hate you," said Zang.

"That makes no difference to me; I only care that you do your duty by the men who pay you and while I am responsible for their interests, as their foreman."

"I know all about it," said Zang. "It's that yeller-haired female that you're feeling so responsible about. Sunshine! if that ain't a peach of a name. Ha, Ha!" But Zang stopped short in his laugh, for before he realized what had happened, he was gazing into the barrel of the biggest 45 Colts he had ever had the misery to look into; while a steady hand held it, a steadier voice said:

"Utter another disrespectful word about her and you will never see Sunshine Golden or the sunshine of heaven. Get on that horse and take the lead out of the gulch." Zang obeyed in sullen silence.

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"Jack, was Zang asleep in the gulch?" Peddy asked when the others had gone to camp to prepare for breakfast.

"Yes, I missed him about midnight and thought that was where he had gone, for when I saw him last, in one of the lightning flashes, his horse was headed that way instead of toward the cattle. All the rest of you I saw at intervals during the flashes."

"I think I will let him out when we get to the railroad with these cattle," said Peddy.

"I have been wanting to tell you something for a long time but am not quite ready yet and I would like you to keep Zang until that time comes, if possible, for you will want him then, and bad too, and if you fire him now you may not be able to find him when you want him. And besides, I could not make any assertions against Zang just yet, for I have not all the proof I want."

"Your judgment has always been good, Jack, and I will ask Charles not to fire him before speaking to you."

All day the rain continued to fall until just before sunset when the sky cleared, but the sun had scarcely sunk from sight when a low rumbling was heard in the northwest and the dark, heavy clouds came floating back. Jack, and Harry Stanley his most intimate

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friend, were jogging along into camp for supper and a change of horses. When they had ridden for some time in silence and were out of hearing of the other boys, Jack asked Harry the reason of his worried look.

"Are you sick, old pal?"

"I do not know any more than you, Jack, what is the matter with me or if the trouble is really with me or Tracy. For two days I cannot get her off my mind for one single minute, and everywhere I look I seem to see her and she looks so sad and worried. I am afraid she is either sick or in trouble. I am not superstitious, but never in my life have I felt like I now do."

"I will stand your guard to-night," said Jack, "and you get a good rest and perhaps you will feel better to-morrow; then when the herd gets on Old Woman Creek you can go over and see if Tracy and her mother are all right."

"No—I would rather stand guard myself as I can't sleep and the night seems to drag so. I am awake to your kindness but I will stand my turn."

"As you like, Harry, but if you feel like sleeping, wake me."

They were now at the camp and nothing more was said on the subject which was destined to be a sad memory in the mind of Jack Randolph ever after.

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That night proved to be a repetition of the previous one and instead of the cattle becoming accustomed to it, they seemed to grow more restless with every hour. The boys sang from the time they came on guard, till they were relieved by the next guard.

Those who have never stood on guard during a dark, stormy night, when you must depend only on the judgment of your wiry little bronch to keep you out of the wire fences, prairie dog holes, and the thousand and one dangers of night herding a bunch of beef cattle, can never know the horror or fascination of this dangerous work. The boys who were not on guard were sleeping soundly, when a heavy voice rang loud above the storm.

"I wish there was a trap door in hell that would open and let you all in. Some fellow get up and get his horse and take my place. If you can, find the dam'd herd. They will be somewhere between here and the V 5 pasture."

"Where is your horse, Tom?" asked Jack.

"I hope the dam'd cayuse is in hell; if he hain't, he will be when I get my eyes on him cause I'll fill him full o' lead when I find him."

Tom had a light now and Jack could see plainly what was the cause of his wrath. His chaps were scratched and torn into fragments and his hands were



The herd had "stampeded."

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badly cut while he was smeared all over with blood.

"What did he do, Tom, throw you into the fence?"

"No, he ran sideways into it, then got scared and wound himself and me all up in the wire. I got off and he kicked me in the leg trying to get out of the mess."

Jack called the Boss and told him of Tom's misfortune and he got up immediately to help Tom care for his wounds while Jack started out to find the herd. He had ridden some time when he heard a sound that made his heart rise in his throat and the perspiration to stand in great drops on his forehead. It was the sound of many hoofs on the ground as their owners ran at a rapid pace. The herd had "stampeded." Jack's first thought when he realized what had happened, was of Harry, his trusty pal, for he was positive he would do all in his power to stop those cattle even at great risk to himself. He urged Prince to do his best, well knowing he would keep his feet if it were possible. When he had ridden what seemed to him an endless time, he began to discern a dark mass of objects moving a short distance in front. He tried to gain on them thinking he might be able to get along the side of the bunch and get them to circling. Where were Harry and the others that were on guard? They were likely up toward the front of the herd. He hoped no one would try to ride in front of that mad-

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dened bunch. The sky was clearing in the East and he could plainly see that something had happened to cause the cattle to slacken their pace a little, and he began to be hopeful, when they seemed to have taken a fresh start and to dash on as though determined to complete their destruction.

"What is it, Prince?" For that knowing animal had stopped so quickly he gave his rider a sudden jolt and caused him no little difficulty in retaining his seat. Jack peered anxiously ahead and saw that they were on the edge of a small draw which was filled with dead and dying cattle. He found a place a little further down to cross, and rode as fast as he could force Prince to go, for he was showing some fatigue.

When he again caught up with the herd he could see several of the boys toward the lead trying to circle the cattle, and came to the conclusion that daylight would soon put an end to their excitement and they would quiet down. At this juncture, without warning, the leaders swerved to the right, and amid the terrific roar of those frightened, maddened brutes, he heard a terrible agonized cry of a man, that was quickly smothered in the awful din of the excited and dying cattle. Short as had been that cry, he had recognized the voice of Harry. Quick as human power could make it possible, he reached the side of the friend who had always seemed more like a brother to him.

CHAPTER XV.

HARRY'S LAST ROUND-UP.

When Jack got through the cattle that had become somewhat quieted, and reached the side of his kind-hearted pal, the sight that met his eyes was one never to be forgotten. He sprang quickly from his horse and took the blood smeared head in his arms and begged Harry to speak to him.

"For God's sake tell me you are not all in. Don't you know me, old pal? It's Jack; say just one little word."

Some of the other boys had come up, and seeing how things were, rode away again at a break neck speed. One for a doctor, and one to the camp, while a third came back shortly with his big Stetson hat turned inside out and filled with water. They gave him some to drink and wiped the blood from his face and head as best they could. Using their saddle blankets for a pillow, they made the poor bruised and

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maimed boy as comfortable as possible till the bed-wagon would come.

When they had waited some time, they heard something that caused them to jump to their feet and look intently in the direction from whence it came. It was the bed-wagon; on the seat were two men, and the four horses hitched to it were galloping at a rapid pace. Jack started for Prince but saw that the driver was Charles Leslie, and he was now getting them slowed down as they were nearing the place where Harry lay.

While Brownie and Buck put up a tent, Jack and Charles Leslie forced some stimulant into Harry's mouth. This seemed to revive him a little, and he opened his eyes, but with a twinge of agony closed them and again became unconscious.

"The bed is ready, Boss," said Buck, and stooping they tried to lift their charge carefully, but as they lifted him their faces grew nearly as white as the man's they were carrying, and an exclamation escaped Jack's tightly drawn mouth.

"Great God!" he sobbed, while drops of perspiration ran down his sympathetic face.

As they lifted the unfortunate boy from the ground, both legs and one hand hung helplessly down. They

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removed his clothes and boots by cutting them away, and it was then that Jack thought of Tracy.

"Oh, why didn't I think of her before; if he wakes it is she he will want and no one else. If he wakes, tell him I have gone for Tracy and to hold on hard till we come."

When he was about half way, he saw someone coming toward him; the figure looked neither to right nor left, but bending low over the neck of its horse, was plying the quirt with all possible strength.

One look, and he knew it was Tracy; evidently Peddy had told her as he passed there going for the doctor. As she neared him she could not speak, for her eyes were dry and her throat swollen almost to suffocation, but Jack understood the question in her pleading eyes and told her Harry still lived. She did not answer, but bending lower over her horse forced him to greater speed.

When they reached the tent where Harry lay, Jack looked searchingly at Charles Leslie, and receiving an approving nod, led the way to the injured man's presence. Tracy threw herself on her knees beside the one who had given her all the love of his brave, young heart.

"Harry! Do you know me? It is Tracy—won't you speak to me?"

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Her voice had worked like magic, for with one great effort he roused himself, and as he uttered her name, Jack withdrew quietly. When he again entered the tent, he felt that Harry was beyond human help, for he had been drawn in by the heartbroken sobs of a girl who begged in vain to the being she loved best to "speak to her just once more!" When his eyes fell on the face of the wounded man, he knew that his faithful pal had gone over the Big Divide that has no return trail.

Jack's concern for Tracy in her inconsolable grief took away the sharp pangs of his own sorrow.

"Come Tracy, you must not give way like this," he told her, as he assisted her to her feet and led her gently from the tent. After a moment: "Did Harry make any request about where he wanted to be taken?"

Between sobs she told him he wished to be buried on the prairie near his home.

Jack accompanied Tracy to her mother, after promising to come back next day with a buggy to take them to the home of Harry's parents where the funeral would be held. Jack and Charles Leslie took all that remained of Harry Stanley, to his grief stricken parents who had only learned of the death of their boy about an hour before.

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The boys of the neighboring outfits took charge of the JA6 cattle until the cowboys of that outfit had paid their last tribute of respect to their unfortunate pal. Mr. and Mrs. Leslie left early in the morning, in the small carriage, that they might drive fast and get to the Stanley's as soon as possible in order to be of what assistance and comfort they could to the sorrowing ones.

Jack had taken the larger buggy and it was lucky he did, for a surprise awaited him at the Petz home. When he reached the yard gate, a familiar form tripped out and opened it for him.

"Sunshine!" he said, in glad astonishment at seeing her before him, when he thought her miles away visiting relatives at Laramie.

"Are you glad to see me back?" she asked.

"How can you ask it? I think you must know I am always glad to see you." He tried to keep his voice steady, but without result. "I am more glad to see you now, and here, than at any time or place that I have ever been. They needed you," he said, pointing to the house, "and then I—I need you. I was thinking just before seeing you how much better it would have been had it been I instead of Harry."

"Don't!" she said.

"And while I was thinking how very much they

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would miss him, I looked up and saw you, and I thought maybe someone would a'missed me a little too."

"Please don't—I—we—would all miss you. I must go and tell them you are here."

"Not till you have told me how you came, and when," he said, seizing her hand and holding it gently but firmly.

"I came out with a driver from Demmon's Livery, and reached here last evening. I saw Peddy when he came for the doctor and I felt I must come and be of what little comfort I could, to poor Tracy."

"Yes she will need you; this will be a very sad day for her," and taking the trembling little hand in his for a second, he turned away to hide his emotion.

"Jack is here, Tracy; he is waiting for us," said Sunshine, as she entered the house. "Please be brave."

They were soon on their way to perform their last sad duty. When they reached the little mother, and Tracy saw how deep was her grief, she was much braver than they had dared to believe she would be.

The casket was plain but the many kind remembrances in the form of wild flowers that lay upon it, bunched and tied by rough cowboy hands, meant more to those sorrowing ones than costly bouquets

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tied with satin bows. Every bunch wound around with grass, showed them that the boy beneath was bound by the ties of true friendship to one more comrade of the plains.

There was no minister to preach an eloquent sermon, only an employer, who told, in trembling voice, of the fine qualities of the brave, true hearted boy who lay cold in death. No choir sang anthems, only Sunshine's voice could be heard, sweet and trembling:

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'er shaded
Sweetly my soul shall rest.”

Cowboys with clanking spurs bore the crude casket to its last resting place beneath a large pine that stood alone, on a side hill, the only monument to mark the resting place of Harry Stanley.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WINNING HAND.

The cattle had been loaded into the cars after considerable difficulty, with the cavey used as a decoy to entice them into the stockyards, and as the trains sped toward the market, the cowboys rode at a reckless speed into the little town, with a whoop and yell, which told the people who lived on the main street, they might as well give up all idea of sleep for at least twelve hours.

"Now boys," said Jack, "I don't care what you do with your summer's wages, or if you blow 'em all, but I do care if you leave your horses tied out here in the street, a'shiverin' an' a'pawin', while you are warming up, and raisin' Hell. Come with me and take care of them and the first drinks will be on the Boss, with his compliments."

"Woop ye!" sang out Brownie, "we'll drink to his health, for he's the one with the fine disposition!"

With much clanking of spurs, they filed noisily into

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Holsapple saloon, and gathering around the bar, ordered drinks on the Boss, for the house.

"Come on feller," said Brownie to a quiet-looking stranger, "drink the health of the Boss!"

"I don't know your Boss."

"Don't know the Boss of the JA6?"

"No."

"Well your hain't barred anyhow."

"I don't drink."

"Have a smoke, then?"

"Don't smoke."

"Do you eat hay??"

"No."

"You unprincipled Heathen! You're no fit associate for man or beast. Who are you, anyway, St. Peter?"

Receiving no answer, he turned to his noisy, laughing companions, and after muttering something about people with stuck-up dispositions, forgot the existence of the stranger, his entire attention being taken up with a poker game in which he had a hand that was causing him to part quickly with his entire summer's wages.

"Sev'n come elev'n," sang out a voice from an obscure corner of the cowboy's "temple," and the punchers knew that Tom O'Day was again at his fav-

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orite post, in front of the crap table, "rolling the bones."

"Big Dick from Boston. Dicey don't you fool me! There's big Dick! You all know him, boys; he brings smiles and the drinks for the house; line up before the bar if you're friends of mine, for I've got 'em acomin' my way! Hit 'em an' split 'em dicie! Up jumps the devil. Take the dirty eagles, for they're pickin' out my pockets! Try again's my motto; if I lose 'em every one, I'll have my bronch and saddle and my spurs, and big six gun. A natural won't hurt him. Come Phebe! Little Phebe that picked the cotton. Roll out an' get him bones."

When Tom had given up his last dollar, he turned away in disgust, and with no thought for the morrow, looked for another source of amusement, which he soon found in Zang, who, having imbibed too much fire-water, was snoozing happily in the corner.

"Say fellers," said Tom, "turn your lamps on that 'er sleepin' beauty, an' tell me if you don't agree with me that his handsome face needs a little doctorin'?"

Without waiting for their decision, he called for a bottle of black and a bottle of red ink, and a large cork. Zang's face soon wore the expression of a Sioux warrior, and from the top of his head a large bunch of the long black locks, of which he was so

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proud, was taken, and after pasting it to a piece of red paper, was left dangling at his belt. The cork was split lengthwise and a dozen nine-day sulphur matches stuck into it, and placed on the victim's nose.

"Take his gun Buck, an' I'll light the sticks."

When the matches began to burn, a dozen voices yelled fire, and someone gave Zang's chair a vicious kick. That individual became alive and fought his head as though all Hades had turned their fiery blasts upon him. As the cork fell from his nose, he reached for his gun and found his holster empty. Tom O'Day grabbed him by the arm, and calling everyone up, said:

"This is one on the sleeping beauty, just to show you there is no hard feeling."

When they reached the bar, Zang was smiling and licking his lips, but looking up, he caught sight of the red painted spot on the top of his head, and his hand brushed the hair of the hideous mocking scalp at his belt. He drew his hand across his eyes as though to obliterate the repulsive face reflected in the mirror before him. Shouts of laughter brought him to a realization of the truth, and he again reached for his gun but with empty hand turned to the others and shaking his fist, cried:

"Laugh, you blubberin' Sons-of-B's! I'll kill every worthless one of you before snow flies."

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Tom held a glass of the real goods under the nose of the angry man, and the smell of the liquid was too much for him, and when he had drained every drop, he was soon laughing with the others at the savage looking warrior in the glass, and a few minutes later was seated at a table interested in a poker game with Buck, Brownie and "Me lord," wrangler for the twenty-one (21).

"Who won that Jack-pot?" inquired O'Day.

"Buck, the lucky dog," said Brownie.

"Well he better come through."

"Sure; everybody drink."

"Light of my life!" said O'Day, as he winked at a full glass of Gloryanna.

The game had proceeded for some time and had now grown too serious for hilarity.

"Let me have another fifty," said Brownie to Jack, who had been watching the game for some time with a suspicious eye open toward Zang.

"Yes, if you'll let me hold the pasteboards, for I think I can change your luck."

The scowl on Zang's face did not disconcert Jack in the least and he proceeded to deal in an unconcerned manner; everybody stayed, and all drew three cards. Zang bet two and a half, Buck passed, Jack called that and raised him ten.

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"That's good," said Me lord; "that's too stiff for this hand."

Zang called that and raised him twenty, Jack called him and tapped him. Zang pushed his money toward the center of the table and bringing a beautiful Black Hill's gold ring into light, he placed it on top.

"I'll put that in at ten dollars."

"Agreed," said Jack.

"Ace full," said Zang as he spread them under Jack's nose, and with the words: "Beat that, damn you," he raised up to draw the money from the table.

As he reached for the money, cards fluttered from his sleeve. In his excitement he had forgotten the telltale cards.

"Six full," said Jack, as he threw down on the astonished Zang and with a steady finger on the trigger, took the money.

He called Brownie, and giving him the money he said, "I thought I could change your luck."

Me lord, who had been a silent witness of the affair, got up and asked permission to examine the ring. He looked on the inside and showed Brownie the initials T. H. from E. H.

"It is as I thot. This ring belongs to a friend of mine and I know he would not a'parted with it if he hadn't been broke. I will give you ten for it and give

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it back to him for he done me a good turn once. His sis give it to him and I know he hated to let it go."

Brownie was glad to get ten dollars for the ring as he had no use for it, and Me lord was glad of the opportunity to do a kind turn for the man who had come to his rescue on the memorable night he was initiated into the (21) outfit.

A poker table was placed in one corner, and after putting a chair upon it, the punchers "boosted" George Quinn, the fiddling freighter, to beat the dust out of the green felt, keeping time to the familiar strains of "Turkey in the Straw" while every man in the house danced in the "stag quadrille." The excitement was at its height when the town marshal stepping just inside the door, with a swelled chest, demanded in a deep voice that the noise be "stopped at once;" for answer he was grabbed by Mayes, the editor and mayor, deprived of his star, which Mayes placed on his own coat and announced to that individual that *he* "would run the town till morning and to run along home and get his little nap;" and shoving him outside, kicked the door shut behind that indignant gentleman, amid shouts of laughter from the punchers, who continued their dancing until they began to grow weary.

Buck put out the lights with his gun, which was a sign for all hands to hunt a place to sleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

TRACY PLAYS DETECTIVE.

Tracy had ridden since early morning looking for Patchen. The sun was in the middle of the sky and she had found no trace of him. She came across the bunch of horses he always ran with, but Patchen was not there. She finally decided he must be dead or hurt, if some one had not ridden him away, for this was the first time he had not gone straight back to his old range in the V. 5 pasture on being turned out.

After riding many miles on a rough gaited horse and feeling tired, she turned toward home much disappointed at not finding Patchen. For some time before reaching the gate she heard cattle bawling, and thinking it might be wolves troubling them, she urged her horse to a faster gait, but when she got to them she found them to be a small bunch of JA6 cows. What could this mean? She saw from the condition of their bags the calves had been taken from them recently. She was positive this had not been done by

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the Leslies or by their orders as they would not have been left in the V-5 pasture. She got off her horse to open the gate and saw tracks where cattle had been recently driven in through it, and over all, a man's tracks where he had closed the gate and started his horse in the opposite direction.

Tracy followed the track a short distance on foot for something in the print of that horse's hoofs had attracted her attention. It was the print of the left hind foot. She had never seen but one horse with a hoof like it and that horse was Patchen. Harry had attempted several times to trim it down, but Patchen was so vicious during the proceeding, that Tracy had begged him to let it go.

"I am sure that someone has ridden him away. This whole affair looks crooked to me. I am going to turn those cows out and follow them," she said.

Crossing Lance Creek, and watching the tracks in the meantime, she was rewarded by finding a place where a man had dismounted and stooped to drink, leaving several tell-tale marks. During this performance, he had put his hand on the soft, muddy bank. On examining it closely, she found something which was hard for her to understand—a perfect hand—all but the first finger which had a large lump on it. She could think of no one who had such a finger.

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Then like a flash it came to her. That finger must have been hurt and was wrapped with a rag. She also found that long shanked spurs had left their mark behind the print of the boot. Then she thought of the hoof print she had found by the V-5 gate, and after a little more searching found just what she had anticipated—the print of the bad shaped hoof of Patchen.

"I will get you, Mr. Rustler, if I have to follow you for a week."

Just after dark she came upon a pen made in the end of a draw and in that pen were the missing calves. Upon satisfying herself the calves belonged to the JA6 cows, she took her horse into a low place and tied him to a sage-brush, and crept back close enough to watch the turn of events when the moon would come up.

After waiting for some time, she heard a horseman approaching from the Buck Creek side. She crept lower, and holding her six-shooter ready, watched the man ride straight to the calf pen. When he saw the cows running around trying to get to their calves he began to swear, and dug his spurs into his horse's side.

"Poor Patchen," said Tracy to herself, "I wish you would buck him off."

But who was the man? She knew everyone in that

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part of the country but was positive she had never seen this man nor heard his voice before. He drove the cows a short distance, then came back and hurriedly changed horses, taking the horse that was staked close to the pen and leaving Patchen in his place. When he had gone out of hearing, she hurriedly saddled her horse, and riding to where Patchen was staked, put the saddle on him and turned the other one loose; he at once started at a brisk trot toward home.

When she was ready to go, she took the end of the rope with which Patchen had been fastened, and taking a dally around the saddle horn, started toward Leslie's, leaving the impression that Patchen had pulled up the sage brush to which he was staked, and had lit out for home. The grass being thick, she knew there would be no footprints.

The hounds greeted Tracy with a low growl as she rode up to the door at the JA6 ranch. Charles Leslie had heard the dogs and came out to see what was the cause of their disturbance. He was surprised at perceiving Tracy, and noticing his worried look, she hurried to assure him there was no trouble,—only a few strayed cattle. She thought it would not be best to tell him the truth as she had found it, until she could be more positive about the matter. Re-

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membering Harry had told her he and Jack had been suspicious over certain actions in Zang that didn't look just straight, she decided to confide in Jack. As she went into the house she saw him come out and take her horse, so without a moment's hesitation, she retraced her steps and followed him.

"Jack," she called under her breath as she neared the barn, for she did not wish any of the men in the bunk house to hear her, "I must talk to you. Take Patchen somewhere. Zang must not see him. Make an opportunity for me to talk to you and say nothing at present, to the rest."

So it was agreed upon—they were to meet clandestinely, and Sunshine was to help along the good work; entering the house again, she managed to get that young lady, leaving all explanation till the three were far enough from the ranch to converse without fear of being overheard, when she said she wanted Sunshine to know what had happened that day, for she felt sure Zang was in the affair, and she wanted her to know too, he was in love with her, and being such a desperate fellow, might cause some trouble. This was a revelation to Jack.

"Why do you think he is in love with her, Tracy?" he asked.

"Harry told me so."

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"Well it won't be well for him, if he ever *does* annoy her," he said, with rising anger.

"I do not anticipate any trouble from him, for judging from his looks, I believe he hates me," said Sunshine.

"I think I should prefer that to the other," Tracy replied.

"Tell us what brought you here so late, Tracy," said Sunshine.

"I have been doing a little detective work. I was hunting for Patchen and found a bunch of JA6 cows that was bawling and showed signs of the calves being taken from them and I let them out and followed them."

"Where did you find them?" asked Jack.

"In the V-5 pasture."

"Did you find the calves?"

"Yes; I found them in a pen, and I hid and watched."

Then she related all that had happened and why she did not want Zang to see Patchen.

"Have you noticed if Zang had a finger with a rag wrapped around it?"

"Yes," said Sunshine. "He has the first finger of the right hand."

"He got off his horse to drink on Lance Creek and

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left his hand-mark in the soft mud, and it is he, then, that took my horse out of the V5 and put the calves in that pen."

"The stranger has likely come to take the calves out of the country," said Jack.

"What will you do about it, Jack?" asked Tracy.

"Watch Zang when he leaves to-morrow and follow him."

"We will go with you," said Sunshine.

"I could not think of letting you go, for they may get desperate when they find they have been caught."

Tracy gave Sunshine's hand a sly squeeze, and when Jack looked the other way she made a motion that seemed to satisfy her.

"What did you do with Patchen, Jack?" Tracy asked.

"I put him in the draw east of the house. Zang got his horse up last night, so I'm sure he will go straight to Lance Creek in the morning."

It was getting late and they returned to the house. When the girls were in their rooms, Sunshine asked Tracy if she thought there would be any trouble.

"The reason I pinched your arm to-night was, because I had made up my mind to go, regardless of what Jack said, and take you with me if you wanted to go."

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"If I *wanted* to go? You knew I would want to go. But what will Jack say?"

"He won't know it till he sees us there, that is if we need to show ourselves. Should there be no trouble, he will not know we are there."

"You are a trump, Tracy."

"Let's get into bed for we will have to get up early."

When morning came, Jack had gone and Zang was getting ready to go. They watched him ride away, headed straight toward Lance Creek and the pen. Sunshine wrote a note to Mrs. Leslie telling her that she had gone with Tracy and she thought they would be back by noon.

Tracy took a saddle horse from the barn and went after Patchen, and Prince, Jack's horse, for Sunshine. They rode hard till they drew near the pens, then leaving their horses in a deep gulch, walked up within a short distance from where the calves were fastened in the rudely constructed pen. Then on their hands and knees they crawled in the high sage brush until they were close enough to see all that was going on. The calves were still there but not a human being in sight. They were talking low and were beginning to think perhaps Jack had run into Zang before he reached the pen, when suddenly they heard horses'

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hoofs and soon Zang rode into sight; going up to the pen, he got off his horse and started to take down the poles, then stopped; looking around he gave a loud whistle but received no response. He fastened the poles then, and proceeded to light a fire after which he took a ring from his saddle pocket and heated it thoroughly. He then threw a calf on its side and hog-tying it, branded it with the ring. When he let the calf up, it had a plain MX on its side. He stooped to stir the fire after dropping the ring into it, and as he raised up, a steady voice commanded him so suddenly to "throw up his hands," they were up, before he realized it.

Jack now came closer and looking first at Zang, then at the calf, said: "So you are the owner of the brand?"

"You have not heard me lay claim to it, have you?"

"No; but the proofs are enough for me."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Mr. Leslie must decide that when I turn you over to him. Drop your gun, Zang."

Zang obeyed and Jack took possession of it and put it in the top of his trousers. A horseman was approaching and Jack, wondering who it might be, turned around to look in the direction from whence came the sound; had not help been near, this would have been his undoing, for no sooner had he turned

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his head, than Zang, with the swiftness of desperation, snatched from beneath the breast of his shirt, a second gun, and as Jack turned, he looked into the deadly weapon pointed square in his face and at full cock.

"You are mine at last," said a cold, hard voice, but before he had finished speaking a shot rang out and Zang's gun dropped to the ground. Jack, wondering who could have been his saviour, stepped up and took possession of gun No. 2 just as Sunshine and Tracy came out of the brush on the edge of the gulch. Sunshine's face was white as death, but Tracy's was calm and determined and in her hand she still held the smoking gun.

"Tracy, what can I say? How can I thank you? I thought you were both at the ranch," said Jack.

"We feared something like this, and could not stay there," Sunshine said.

"Little girl," taking her hand, "I sure do appreciate your thoughtfulness," he replied.

Somewhat abashed, her eyes dropped, and withdrawing her hand, she turned and walked toward Zang.

"Won't you leave here, if they will give you one more chance? I am sorry you are in this mess. If they will let you go, won't you go far away and never come back?"

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"Miss Sunshine, if you want me to, I will go tuther side the big pond if you can get them to let me loose," said Zang.

"I will talk to Jack and see if I can do anything for you."

"Thank you; I am sure he will not refuse *you*. I could not myself."

She took little heed of the last remark, but inquired of him if he knew the man who rode up and then dashed away in such a hurry.

"Yes I know the cowardly cur, and when I meet him again, there'll be a reckoning."

"Don't you think it would be better for you to drop those ideas and live a different life?"

"Well ma'am, I 'spect it would, but it's a little late in the game."

"Better late than never."

"Bein' you look at it that way, I'll try, ma'am."

"I'm glad to hear you say so."

Jack and Tracy had been talking the matter over, and had come to the conclusion that it would be best to take Zang and the calves to the ranch and let the Leslie brothers decide the matter themselves.

"What have you decided to do with Zang, Jack?" asked Sunshine.

"Take him to the ranch."

THE FOREMAN OF THE JAIL

"If Mr. Leslie is willing, will you turn him loose to try and make a new start? He has promised he will leave the country forever."

"We will talk to Mr. Leslie first. I cannot say yet, but why are you so interested in him?"

"Simply because I feel sorry for anyone who has not been taught honesty, and think often if such people were given a chance to see the error of their ways, they would reform; sometimes if they are compelled to go to prison, they become hardened toward all mankind because one man must go to the pen for stealing a calf while another steals hundreds of thousands of dollars, and goes without punishment. Let the Leslies decide the matter. I will ride to the ranch and ask them to meet you, for if they wished to let Zang leave the country he will not want to see the others," said Sunshine.

She found Charles Leslie and told him all that had happened and also about Zang's promise to reform. After a long talk with Jack and the prisoner, Charles Leslie decided to be merciful and give the latter a chance for a new start.

Zang seemed very grateful and thanked them all and with a long, lingering look at Sunshine, left the country forever, while Jack's scowl followed him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW NEIGHBORS.

"We've got new neighbors on the Tim ranch," said Brownie who had just come into the house to tell the news on his return after a hurried trip to town.

"Who are they?" asked Mrs. Leslie.

"Their name is Roy, and I think they came from Wisconsin. I don't know just how many of them goes to make up the family but I saw two good lookin' girls, that would be worth stealin', if a feller could work it like an Indian. Hain't Peddy been tellin' you about the little black eyed one?"

"I have heard nothing about them until now. 'Fess up Peddy, what you keepin' it dark for?"

"I have nothing to confess," said Peddy, but his evident confusion told them much. "I went to the school house on Old Woman Creek at recess and asked for a drink of water and met Miss Olive, who is teaching there, and I was riding after cattle over

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that way one day and dark caught me, so I stayed over night at her home."

"Whoop ye," sang out Brownie. "What an innocent disposition! If that ain't rich! Never drank out o' anything but the rim of his Stetson before, when he was ridin', but suddenly takes a hankerin' to drink once more out of 'the school-house dipper.' Just to bring back old school-days I suppose, eh, Peddy? Say, if you keep on getting so innocent, the angels will swoop down here an take you home."

"O shut up."

"I will, Peddy, only please put Queen Olives on the next chuck order, Mrs. Leslie, 'cause he'll never eat keg mustard pickles any more. Ha! Ha!" and as Peddy jumped from his chair, he went through the door and round to the bunk house to tell the boys, who tried to find out through him something of the new girls on the Tim ranch, but their efforts proved fruitless. He suggested, if they wanted to know anything more than he had already told them, to go and find out for themselves.

"I b'lieve I will," said Buck. "I often thot I would like to go to school again for a few days. I'll ask Mrs. Leslie if she ain't got a second or third reader layin' about, I could borry to take with me. I won't want anything higher 'cause I'd have to study an' I

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swore off on that when I rode my first bronch. Say Peddy, did you ever hear that fine little song: 'School days, school days, dear old golden rule days'?"

"Shut up. Buck you've got a voice like a buzz-saw."

"I wasn't singing for the music part only; I wanted you to hear the words; they are so 'tender and sweet.' Everything about a school-house is, you know."

Peddy only smiled, but as he rode away he thought much of the pretty little black-eyed teacher who seemed so timid of everything and everyone in what she called this wild, wild West. Would she ever get so she would look at him? for she would always look down whenever she found he was looking at her. He dared not entertain a hope that she was interested in him in any way but as a friend.

"I always thought I would not want to be bothered with a home and family, but since I seen that little girl I have noticed how much Charles seems to enjoy that same bother. What that little teacher has done to make me change my views, I can't say. But changed they certainly are. When I first talked to her she hated these wild, barren plains, and seemed to think the people that inhabited them, heathens. But when I talked to her yesterday she said she was learn-

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ing to like it, the sunsets were so glorious and the air so fresh and pure. 'And I am beginning to like the unpretentious manner of the cowboys,' she said.

"I begin to feel quite flattered when I think of what she said. When I asked her later if she knew many of the boys, she answered:

"'No, only one of the older ones and you.' I wonder which one was the cause of her changing her mind,—the older one, or me?"

"Say Peddy, brace up, the clouds are not so black in your sky; don't let an old cowboy beat you in the race for a pretty schoolma'am like that. Neat and clean as a bran' new saddle an' cooks chuck fit for the gods. An' say, the way she does hammer them pianie keys. It makes me lightheaded to watch her," continued Peddy talking to his shadow. "She is just the size to look good and that little red affair she had under her chin was just the right contrast to her hair an' eyes."

Before he realized where he was, his horse stood before the gate of the Tim pasture waiting for him to open it.

"Say Spider, you old rascal, I must not let the boys ride you if they are coming this direction; I'm afraid you would give me away, and I would never hear the last of it.

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"Bein' you want to go this way, Spider, we'll just ride through and go along Old Woman Creek and if it's about the time the kids get out of the school house for a little exercise, why we'll just stop an' say howdy to the little schoolma'am. If she looks at me a little encouraging I'll just ask her to ride into the village with me to the dance next week."

When Peddy rode past the Roy home, the father of Miss Olive came out to ask him if he had seen any of his cattle on Lance Creek and talked so long that young man began to get uneasy, wondering if it was not nearly time for the youngsters to get out. After making a few awkward blunders, he excused himself saying he was going to meet a party on Old Woman Creek.

Riding leisurely away, he crossed the creek, and getting out of sight surprised Spider with a few sharp digs with the spurs which caused him to jump ahead and run at break neck speed, but before reaching the little school house on the bank of the creek, Spider had been slowed down to a gentle trot.

Miss Olive, hearing the approaching horseman, came to the door just as one of the urchins called out:

"Oh teacher; here comes your new beau."

"Aw shut up," said Peddy, in an undertone. "I just come to get a drink."

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"Then you'll have to go down to the creek, 'cause the pail's empty."

"Here kid," he said handing him a bright shining cart wheel, "go'n get a pail of water, an' shut your mouth."

The kid did as he was told. Peddy took a great deal of time tying his horse's reins to its front leg, for he had no excuse to get into that school house till the boy got back with the water but when he did, he went straight to that pail and drank like a man who had ridden all day in the hot sun and dry sand, instead of coming only twelve miles right through two creeks to get a fill out of the limited supply in the school house pail.

"How are the children alearnin', Miss Olive?"

"Very well, thank you."

"Are you very tired on Friday nights?"

"Not usually."

"There is going to be a little social dance at the hall in the village. I was awonderin' if you would like to go."

"Yes I should like it very much."

"Then I will drive over and take you in. Can you be ready to go right from here?"

"Yes; and you must excuse me now as it is time to call school," and Peddy, whistling gaily, now that

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he had accomplished his purpose, went back to his horse.

It seemed that Friday would never come. Time surely passed too slowly! But when it did come, and he had eaten his breakfast, he left, telling Charles not to count on him for a couple of days. It took him nearly all forenoon to find the driving horses as he would take none but the best. When he had them in the corral they had to be cleaned and the buggy taken down to the creek and washed. How glad he was the boys were all away that morning, fixing the pasture fence and hunting the horses that had gone through it and were badly scattered. Then came what is always a trial to a cowboy—dressing up. He got into a pair of California trousers, a cream flannel shirt, a dark red tie and black coat and shoes. How he hated those shoes!

"I couldn't be a dude," he mused, "not even for that little schoolma'am!"

When he drove up to the door he thought he never saw a prettier picture than the one before him. His "schoolma'am" attired in a dark red tailored suit and a hat of the same color, with a large plume falling over one side peeping slyly out from under an auto veil, was the picture framed by the rough door casing of the little log school house.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PICTURE IN THE CLOUDS.

"Have you heard anything of Zang, Jack?" asked Sunshine.

"Yes, I saw a fellow from Casper at Shelden's, and he said he saw Zang hitting the trail for the Big Horn Basin."

"Then he will not reform, will he?"

"I cannot say as to that, but must confess, I have my doubts."

"Then I sincerely hope he has no one to worry or that he will cause no heart breaks."

"Won't you waste a little of your sympathy on someone who is nearer, and can appreciate it? I know a man very close who may not die of a broken heart, but will live a very sad life if he cannot interest a certain young lady in the happiness of his future. I have never joined a church, for I couldn't live up to the promise I would have to give, so I would not give a promise even to myself, I could not

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keep. I am not even a Christian as the world understands the word, but when I came to this great free West, I was just a kid of fifteen. I could not stand office or city life. I wanted to see more of the blue sky, and when I saw the long, long stretches of prairie and the great, many colored walls of the canyons—a far more beautiful sight than has ever been produced by man—I could not doubt the word of my good mother when she taught me that all things were created and governed by a wise and powerful Being called God, and as her guidance kept me from falling when a baby, so has the thought of her goodness and kindness kept me from wrong since I had to be my own guide. I am not what many people would call ‘respectable.’ I never wore a boiled shirt in my life, but, Miss Sunshine, maybe if I was taken from the wilds, like the ugly, gnarled, old oak, I might be polished and made presentable to the public!”

“I like you better with your natural, honest manner, Mr. Randolph.”

“Why ‘Mr. Randolph,’ now? Is the picture I have drawn so forbidding? I know I have no right to presume that you could care for an unpolished, ignorant man like me. But you have been so kind, and you remember, you told me once, ‘Faint heart never won.’ ”

“But Jack, we were not speaking of me, then.”

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"Perhaps not, but I was speaking of *you* when I said if a feller never ventured he would never win."

"You said it was a girl away out of your reach," she said, smiling inwardly.

He looked at her very steadily for a minute and seeing her eyes were dancing with mischief, started toward her, but he was too late, for she was on her horse calling to him to hurry as she had seen a coyote go over the hill in front of them. Just as he caught up to her, Charles Leslie and the hounds came into sight and he asked them to join in the fun.

"Sunshine, what made you dash away from me like that?" he asked, when an opportunity presented itself.

"Why because I wanted to chase the coyote;" but the color in her cheeks and the persistent way she avoided looking at him, gave him a feeling of encouragement, and a picture of a cozy ranch home came before him—a picture of a home that beggars description—a dream that must be realized, for life would mean nothing, otherwise, or so he thought, and to gain this end, *facta, non verba*—deeds, not words—would be his future motto.

The dogs were getting too close to the coyote for his comfort and he tried dodging. He wanted to keep close to Sunshine for she was riding Prince and he was noted for his short turns when following any-

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thing, but Jack soon realized he did not have to trouble himself, for Sunshine sat as steady as though she had ridden wiry little cow-ponies all her life. She was very anxious that the hounds should catch the coyote, but when they did get it, she made him shoot it because she could not bear to see the dogs torture it. When the dogs got tired of tearing and biting at its lifeless body, Charles Leslie left them for more sport, and entered the Buck Creek Hills to look for a wolf, as he had seen tracks of one going up the creek that morning.

"Better come along," he said, as he rode away.

"No; I don't think I will, for it is now past the time I told Florence I would be back, and she might worry, but Jack can go; I know the way home and Prince is a very reliable horse."

Charles Leslie understood the look Jack gave him and said, "Not on your life; if you do not care to go, Jack can't go. Do you think I want to be rounded up good and proper when I get home? Do you realize what my wife would say if I should take your escort and allow you to ride alone over these wild, forsaken prairies?" And with a stern look at Sunshine and a wink at Jack, he rode away, laughing.

They went along in silence for some time, Jack

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drinking to the last drop the cup of joy held out to him in the companionship of this girl whom he now realized was the only one for him, in all the world. How he envied the wind as it blew her hair across her mouth and cheeks!

"What are you thinking of, that makes you so quiet, Sunshine?" he asked.

"I was wondering what were beyond those beautiful, fleecy clouds. I do pity the people in the close, dismal cities, who know nothing of the wonders provided by Nature, especially in these clear stretches of endless prairie. Oftentimes I have watched from the early evening, when the sinking sun threw its many hues into the grandest blending of color the human eye has ever seen, and human skill failed to produce, until the earth was covered with a canopy of black, dotted with its millions of electric lights and you could see to read by the light of the moon—God's arc light of the plains—did you ever see pictures in the clouds, Jack?"

"For many months the clouds have held a beautiful picture for me.. Every day when I am riding, no matter how the weather, I can always find my picture."

"What is it like?"

"A ranch home; with a log house—just an ordinary

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log house, surrounded by cotton-wood trees. Inside it is clean and home-like, with a large fire-place."

"But Jack, your picture must be an unusual one when you can look through from the outside and see the furnishings on the inside of the house."

"This sort of picture *is* unusual," he said. "But wait till I am through with my description. On a rustic porch shaded by creeping vines, some one is sitting—some one I love very much. She is dressed in light, flimsy stuff that looks mighty pretty on her. Now I see a man riding toward the house. He rides through the large corral to the barn where stands a black horse that whinnies as he rides up."

"Prince!" interrupted Sunshine.

"Yes Prince," said Jack, "and as the man walks towards the house, the girl in the hammock runs out to meet him, and he forgets how tired he is, for he is very happy."

"Now Jack, confess; didn't you see that in some moving picture show?"

"How can you make so light of it! The happiness of my future life depends on the realization of that picture," he said, noticeably hurt.

"I beg your pardon."

"It is granted if you will look up and try and see the picture."

"I cannot see it, Jack."

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"Look again, then look at me." He had dismounted and was standing beside her. "Don't you see it?" His voice was hoarse with emotion. "Perhaps I am selfish. Does a picture of a different home appear to you? A home in the city with a brown stone front and—wealth, great wealth?"

"Jack! I thought you knew me better than that," she answered.

"Won't you try and see it then?" he pleaded.

"If you will get on your horse, I will talk to you," she said, evading his question.

He did as she bade him and stood waiting. Gathering her reins in her hand she looked up to where he had tried to show her the picture.

"Jack!" then stopped very suddenly, as if to take a breath, "the picture you have tried to show me, is beautiful, and is the sort of home I want when I *do* have one."

"Sunshine!"

"I'm not through, yet. I can see the outside, but my eyes are not as good as yours. I can't see the inside from here." and digging her spurs into Prince she dashed away leaving him stunned for a minute but with joy. When he reached her side she was over the hill in sight of the ranch and they could see Mrs. Leslie standing outside, looking intently as though expecting someone.



"Don't you see it?" said he, in a voice hoarse with emotion.

CHAPTER XX.

A REVERY.

"Prince, old horse, this thing can't go on," Jack confided to that knowing animal.. "If that little girl don't take a liken to this here same cowpuncher, why I'll have to pack my horse and hunt another range—I can't go on in this way. I have stood all kinds of weather and gone without many a meal an' done all kinds of hard work, but I felt strong after it beside what I feel when I think of living without her. I guess I'm hard hit. I know that's what the boys would say. I use to think nothing could persuade me to turn my back on the range to live in the country of the suffocatin' hills and forests, but Prince, ol' horse, I never know'd what love was then. They talk about love in a cottage and I use to think I would die if I had to live in a cottage and have only the hum drum of city life, but now I understand it ain't the country nor the kind of a building you live in—*it's the partner you have!* If you have the mate Nature intended you

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to have, it don't matter what kind of country you have to live in—if *she* is satisfied with it I could learn to like it.”

He had been pouring the contents of his heart and mind out to Prince, for he was no exception to the rule of cowpunchers who say that “a horse-brute has more sense than lots o’ men and some women ’cause they never tell what you confide to them.”

“Prince, you ol’ fool bronch, why don’t you kick me or bite me when I insult myself afore you? I have been only considerin’ my own pleasures an likin’s. Mine—think of it! Selfish, mean and thoughtless!”

After a little quiet thought, he started forward and, throwing his arms around Prince’s neck, shook like a man suffering with ague. The old horse rubbing his nose on his master’s shoulders, seemed as though he would make him understand how he sympathized with him in trouble. When the paroxysm had passed, Jack straightened himself and again addressed his dumb friend:

“Prince, I have come to my senses at last, but it’s mighty hard to face. I must go away; I see now how I forced my good-for-nothin’ self wherever she was concerned, but my eyes are opened and I will save her from herself. I will go away, it will be hard, bitter hard—but I know now she is too far above *me*,

A REVERY

and a log cabin and a common cowboy are not for such as her—she is not meant for this rough life I should have to offer.”

Then, in an aggrieved tone: “Why did you come for then I would never have known this sorrow! But it has made me a better man.” With this he buried his face in his horse’s mane and when he raised his head again he was strong once more and not the broken reed of a few minutes before. On the following day, he told Mr. Leslie he would like his “time,” if it would be convenient, as he wished to go into the western part of the state.

“I regret very much that you feel you must go; you were just like one of us. Is there nothing I can do that will cause you to change your mind?”

“No sir; you have been mighty kind and I regret to leave, but circumstances that I cannot explain make my stayin’ here impossible.”

Mr. Leslie, a little suspicious at this sudden leave taking, went into the house to break the news to his wife and also to watch the effect on Sunshine.

He found them together and told them that Jack had resigned his position.

“Jack going away?” said Sunshine, in hurt surprise.

“Of course he is not, Sunshine,” Mrs Leslie replied.

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"Charlie is trying to surprise an unconscious confession from you," and smiling, she continued her work.

"You are mistaken, Florence. I was never more sincere in my life. Jack has asked me to let him go as soon as convenient."

"But why does he want to leave?" asked Mrs. Leslie, innocently enough. Before Charles could reply, the object of discussion stood in the door. He was not in the habit of beating around when he had anything to say, so stepping inside, remarked:

"Miss Sunshine I would like to have a talk with you—will you ride with me to the pine hills?"

"Yes," she answered simply, and left Mr. and Mrs. Leslie, to dress for the ride. After Sunshine went to her room, to get ready, Mrs Leslie tapped on the door and a choked voice bade her "come in;" Sunshine did not look up but a give-away tear on her cheek told its tale, whereupon she took her charge in her arms, saying:

"Sunshine, have you and Jack quarreled?"

"No Florence, we parted very good friends yesterday. I don't know what to make of him."

"Let us hope this cloud will pass away, and Sunshine, if it is for foolish scruples about his unfitness for you, dear little girl, I know of no other I would rather trust with your happiness; his exterior may be

A REVERY

a little rough, but he is a manly fellow and I am positive he loves you very dearly."

Sunshine pulled on her gauntlets and Florence kissed her and told her to make up the little differences and persuade him to stay.

When the two riders were out of hearing and had reached the brakes, they sat on a fallen tree beneath a large sighing pine for several minutes before he found voice to speak, then he rose and pacing savagely before her he talked rapidly and with feverish haste.

"Little girl, I love you and because I love you I must leave you."

"Jack!" came from her trembling lips. This sudden outburst fairly took her breath away.

"Don't, Sunshine; don't stop me till I'm through or I'll get weak and won't be strong enough to do the thing I know now is my duty. I love you with a heart-whole love and have planned over and over how I would make a home for us just like I described to you the other day, where we should be so happy, but it never entered my thoughtless head that this thing was all one-sided—that I was simply fixin' for my own selfish, comfortable happiness. I can see the light now an' I'm goin' away 'cause I ain't strong enough to stay here without that picture bein' real-

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ized. Your position is in a fine home in the civilized world."

She started toward him, but he stopped her.

"Don't, if you got any pity, don't come near me. I know you are too good to see it now, but I am only a poor, weak, love-starved man an' if I touched you I would take you in these coarse, rough arms an' then, an' then"—he faltered, "I could not go."

She had been as one turned to stone. Realizing, at last, that he intended to leave her, she started toward him with burning cheeks.

"Jack Randolph, my Jack, don't you see it would be the most cruel thing you could do to leave me now, when I just realized how I —"

"Hello there!" shouted a voice beside them. They turned to see Peddy. "Say: but this is a fine shady place; may I sit down?"

"Certainly," said Jack, who was the first to find his voice, and not realizing he was an intruder, Peddy sat and chatted till it was too late for anything else but to return to the ranch.

Sunshine mounted her horse without a word and when she entered the house, Florence felt as though something unpleasant permeated the very atmosphere all about them.

"Oh dearie, what is the matter?"

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"Florence, he says it's because he loves me and he isn't worthy of me—think of it—not worthy of a girl like me! He does not love me or he could not go and let me break my heart," and she wept as though her heart were indeed breaking.

All night long she tossed, and in the morning when she had eaten a scant breakfast, Florence handed her a note: "Don't take this affair too hard, dear, for if you love each other, it will come out all right."

But in the seclusion of her room, Sunshine read it with tear-blinded eyes; he could not bid her good-bye in person, so had taken this method as being better for them both!

When he had spoken to her of his intention of going away to save her from herself, he felt his duty was done, and he must get away and so told Mr. Leslie. "The Boss" regretted Jack's decision very much, however, there was no other alternative but to submit.

"Do you think this is really justice to Sunshine? She loves you, boy."

"If I did not think so I would not be leaving her."

"You know your affairs better than I, but think well, for this may ruin the happiness of you both."

Jack caught his pack horse, and after bidding Mr. and Mrs. Leslie good-bye, and leaving the note for

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Sunshine, rode away. When he left the ranch he had no positive destination in view, only that he would go West or perhaps North-west into the Big Horn Mountains, if the Casper country was not change enough.

After two lonely, heart-sick days, a haggard-faced, weary, semblance of himself, rode into Douglas, which place he found all excitement, caused by the reported robbery of a Union Pacific train at Wilcox. Trailing robbers seemed the thing most pleasing to him, so he set about trying to find out what were his chances for getting into the posse that he was sure would be formed to trail the train hold-ups.

There was considerable profane language indulged in when to his disgust, he found they had left twelve hours before he arrived in the little city. After making inquiry as to the mode of operation, etc., he came to the conclusion that it must have been the work of the Hole-in-the-Wall gang, and with this idea in mind, started out once more intending to make Glenrock and then Casper if necessary, to catch some sheriff or posse with whom he might take up the dangerous trail.

He did not wish to be recognized by any of his friends or acquaintances for they would ask him questions he wouldn't care to answer; after making arrangements with a liveryman to look out for his

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pack horse till he returned or sent for it, he secured a plentiful supply of cartridges for both six-shooter and rifle, and took up the western trail once more.

Passing through Glenrock and Casper he heard wild rumors but no definite information regarding either the posses or the robbers only that all was supposed to be headed for the Big Horn Mountains, and thither he turned his horse. He had been very lucky so far on his journey in striking ranches or camps where he could get something to eat, but he had eaten nothing since morning, when he had taken some breakfast at a sheep camp where the herder told him he had seen no one for many days.

Recently, his usual ravenous appetite seemed to cause him very little trouble.. The only thing he wished for now was action—anything that would arouse his mind from its present state.

Slowly the daylight faded, and the golden glow of the setting sun was only visible now and then between the fast moving stormy looking clouds.

The noise made by themselves and the occasional flutter of a bird from a sagebrush that grew a little too close to the trail where the hoofs of the horse beat a steady "tat-tat-too" in the long swinging lope known so well to the western cow-pony, were the only sounds that broke the silence.. The gloomy stillness made Jack settle a little lower in his saddle, and with

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hands resting idly on the saddle-horn and his chin dropped on his chest, he rode along, not realizing that the sun had sunk from sight and the black cloak of night was quickly covering all, before he had given one thought to where he would lay his weary head.

Prince was getting tired and changed his gait to a dog-trot, but Jack continued dreaming—he had never craved riches—never yearned for power; only one thing had he longed for, and that was the love of a woman—the one woman!

"*The one woman!*" he said aloud, as he thought of her with hands outstretched to him when he told her he was going away.

Suddenly something startled him and he sat very erect; what if she had really learned to care for him, care enough to overlook all his shortcomings and grieve because he left? But he would not deceive himself into such a belief—she would forget.

"What are you stopping for, you fool?" he growled, as he gave Prince a kick forgetting in his own misery that his faithful horse would not have done so without cause. The poor brute trembled but stood resolute. Jack began to realize something was wrong. He raised high in his stirrups and peered into the darkness, and as he did so, he saw a flash of fire. Prince plunged forward, his rider felt himself being thrown into space and knew no more.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ABSORBED LISTENER.

When he opened his eyes in wonder, he beheld strange surroundings, and tried to rise but found the effort made him sick and faint. Looking about, everything seemed to spin round and round compelling him to close his eyes.

"Where am I? How did I come to be laying in this strange place?"

There was a slight rustle beside him and strangely sweet eyes looked into his.

"Drink this, please; and when you have rested a little I will explain," were the first words he heard.

Then raising his head very carefully, he perceived a woman holding something cool to his lips and with feverish thirst he drained it. Very gently he felt his head being lowered to the pillow, and in a few minutes he remembered the shot and the fall.

"Was I shot?"

"No, you were not shot, but your horse was, and

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you both rolled over the bank, and when I found you, your body was partly under his."

"And he was dead?"

"Yes."

"The cursed brute. Why did he spare me? Why didn't he finish his work and put me out of my misery? Poor Prince!" His voice grew husky and his eyes moist. His companion said nothing but handed him a handkerchief and raising his head, gave him another drink of the cool, quieting liquid from the glass.

"Please don't mind what I say—I loved that horse like a human."

"I can sympathize with you, for the only true friend and companion I have is my pony."

Trying to turn so he might see the face of the speaker, for he could not understand why so gentle a woman should be alone and forsaken, according to her own testimony, he enquired:

"Will you please tell me how I came here? I remember nothing after falling."

"I brought you. I fear I added to your injuries, but it had to be done. I could not care for you there; so with the help of my pony I brought you here."

"How long has it been?"

"Two days."

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"Two days! Then I am too late."

"Too late for what?"

"To continue the trail!"

"Yes, you will be too late unless some of them should return and I sincerely hope they never will, for it would mean death to you if you were not able to fight a hard fight."

"And you?"

"Perhaps, but that does not matter. Once it would have seemed terrible, but now—"

He heard a sob, and the door close softly. The stillness was broken only by the ticking of a small clock. What could it mean? How did *she* come to be so many miles away from friends—alone? And who could the man be who had shot at Prince for it was evident he had no intention to kill—only to leave his victim afoot by killing his horse. Wondering at his own situation and pitying this girl who had so kindly cared for him, he fell into a doze.

Suddenly he was awakened by some one shaking him vigorously and begging him to "try very hard to get up—put this on—quick! oh quick! They are coming!" He asked no questions—her white face and gasping breath told him enough. He raised himself unsteadily to his feet and stumbling, allowed her to lead him whither she would. Every step was torture

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—he shut his teeth and forced himself to be dragged first out into the sunshine and then into darkness—musty, earthy blackness. She told him to lie down and he obeyed with what assistance she could give him.

“If you value your life and mine, make no sound but if they find you, use this, and if you feel faint, drink some of this,” giving him a large six-shooter and a flask of whiskey, at the same time. Then, before he could answer, she was gone.

With head throbbing and a pain in his side and ankle, he lay there martyr-like, and waited. He took some of the whiskey, then tried to find out something of his musty quarters—an old unused dug-out cellar which was windowless, and a mildewed sугan nailed over the aperture served as a door, canvas sacks were nailed over the logs that formed the front where the mud dobbling had fallen out, leaving great gaping holes. A pile of hay in a corner formed his bed, a couple of old army blankets, clean but much worn, were folded on a box beside him. Hearing no sound, he drew the canvas a little aside and his eye saw what made his cheek burn and his determined jaw set hard. An old tin wash-bowl on a box, and a slightly soiled towel, a small piece of soap and clean piece of rag, and a comb, showed where a woman had made her morning toilet, while many tracks of her shoe

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were plainly visible between the box and the pile of hay where he lay.

He groaned as he realized how much he was indebted to this woman. From all indications she had passed the nights in this terrible place that he might have the only bed the house contained, and was even now risking her life to save his—and he, a stranger! He was deeply touched and though he didn't realize it at the time, this one little incident brought her nearer to him than months of ordinary friendship might have done—so well does Fate play her tricks on us! Why did these thieves and murderers come to the home of a woman? Jack ground his teeth and swore an oath to himself. By degrees he got up and peeped through the cracks to see the approaching horsemen, for the sound of horses' hoofs had awakened him from his reverie.. He could not discern them on account of their being down over the bank in a rude corral in the creek bottom, but as they neared the house, he recognized the voice of Zang.

With the instinct of the old range rider, the sound of the enemy's voice made him reach for his gun, then he cursed his weakness and his bad luck. What would he not have given to have his health and strength! Here he was, a rat in a trap, helpless..

The time when they entered the cabin until dark

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seemed endless. With pieces of the blanket he had bandaged his ankle and bound his body and in so doing, increased the pain already felt in his side, but like the man he was, he bore it with unflinching nerve.

As night advanced he found that a sentry had been placed on watch. Slowly back and forth he walked from the top of the knoll above the dug-out to the bank of the creek in front of the cabin. Waiting till it was very dark, and when the man on watch went to the end of his beat behind the dug-out, Jack crept out—every move a pain. Close by the cabin some canned goods boxes and numerous other trash had been piled; behind this he crawled and with the old canvas sacks from the cellar thrown over him in case the moon should come out from behind the stormy looking clouds, he waited—silently. With his knife he dug a little of the dobbing from between the logs while the men laughed and talked inside, drowning any unusual small noise. Soon he could hear everything, but was only able to see one face—it was the face of Harvey Slogan, short, dark, with piercing eyes. He had not yet passed into middle life but was old in the ways of crime. Cool and generous with his friends, cruel to his enemies, and hating like a viper, the wealthy, especially the railroad magnets who, he told his pals were bigger thieves than any one of them, “for, fellers,

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they steal from women and weak men, with their watered stocks and so-called square business, while we only take from those who can stand it."

It had been he who had planned the robbery of the Union Pacific train; found out when the money they must have to pay them for such a risky piece of business, would be shipped, and notified Billy Mountain that they might be obliged to steal some horses and "grub" from him in getting back to the Hole-in-the-Wall. But even though Harvey Slogan was known through the entire Middle-West for his terrible crimes of robbery and murder, Jack could not but admire his cool command of himself, and also of the men of his gang.

The latter's cramped position was becoming intolerable, and fearing the excruciating pain might force a groan or outcry, he watched his chance and crept back to his pile of hay in the cellar, where for some time his suffering took all other thoughts from his mind and compelled him to resort again to the contents of the flask.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ROBBERY ON LARAMIE PLAINS.

The passengers on the Union Pacific westbound had been sleeping several hours when one of the train men remarked to a porter:

"I am always glad when we get out of these plains, it is such a lonely God-forsaken place."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when the train began slowing down, and with a jar that nearly threw them off their feet, came to a stand.

"Something is wrong, Bill," said the Brakee.

"What you 'spose'n gone wrong?"

Just then shots were heard and the whizz of bullets passing along the side of the train brought the conductor to a realization of what was happening ahead. Passing quickly down the aisle he warned each one if he valued his life to keep his head inside the train.

Fainting women and white faced men had scarcely caught their breaths from the first shock, when without warning, a terrific explosion shook the train till

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the frightened passengers expected every minute to feel the car falling where the earth had opened up to swallow it, but in this they were disappointed for the bandits soon disappeared with their booty, leaving the passengers and train men to recover their senses as best they could.

Before the excitement had died away, Harve, the leader of his gang of robbers, began giving his orders to his men in a cool, unconcerned manner..

"Here Munsey, you take this sack; and I'll take the other in case we should get separated. Now fellows don't forget. Always keep cool and don't kill your horses the first day. Remember we have several hours' advantage of our trailers, and when they find our track so plain they will ride hard thinking their task an easy one, but we need this junk and we ain't goin' to make them a present of it, till they earn it, anyway."

They had ridden along in silence for some time when Harve told them to ride a little to the left as he could see some horses. When they reached them and discovered they ranged in that vicinity, they scattered out and with the herd of horses ahead, did a little fancy drill to obliterate their tracks; then driving them toward the rough country they knew that they had given themselves several hours' advantage over

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their trailers. When they had ridden some distance, they again looked at the spoils, and dividing as nearly as they could, hurriedly disbanded, three going south to Robber's Roost and three going north to the Hole-in-the-Wall, where they would find friends who were no friends to a sheriff or his men.

Beds were not to be thought of, and food scarcely hoped for, for many hours, as they realized they were nearing the danger line. The three going north went through Cottonwood Pass and the head of La Parele, straight through the mountains, till they got on the north side, intending to cross the Platte River near Glenrock, but found it bank full and no ford or bridge where they could cross nearer than Casper.

"Fellers," said Harve, "we have got to let our horses rest before long or we will be afoot. We won't get any fresh horses till we get to Billy Mountain's 'cause I told Skinney to hold our horses on the head of Salt Creek, till to-morrow noon, and if we did not come by that time, it would be 'cause we couldn't, and we can't swing that way now; it is too far; we would lose good time. We will camp in that draw yonder; it will be out of sight, and so near the railroad, they will not be looking for us there, in case they are trailing us."

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"I would give a good sum for a bite to eat," said Zang.

"Walk down round the bend and see if there is any water," suggested Harve. "We can fill up and let our horses get a little to brace them."

Zang soon came back saying he had found a water hole and men and horses felt much better after drinking. They had not slept or scarcely stopped for about forty-five hours and both were very tired. When darkness had drawn its black curtain over the earth, the trio again took up the trail for the Hole-in-the-Wall, the hot pot of crime and criminals.

"Where will you head for, Harve?" asked Cotton Top.

"Right through the town. And look well to your guns. Have you the shot gun in shape?"

"Yes."

"Then put it out of sight till we reach the bridge. Now ride straight ahead and don't rubber. They won't hardly be lookin' for us in town playin' tag with the sheriff's coat tails. Don't forget, I'll stay with you, and if one of you plays off, I'll kill you in your tracks. Stay together and keep cool."

The little city of Casper was known as "the toughest town on the North Western R. R." of which it was the terminus, and midnight found nearly double

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the amount of people on its streets. Music came floating from many saloons and the familiar yelling of the inevitable cowpuncher could be heard all over. In short this was the noisy hour in this wild, wide open town. Realizing this, the bandit trio knew that a few cowboys more or less would be scarcely noticed on streets where broncho bucking contests by lamp or moonlight were not an unusual thing.

The three passed through the town in safety and were nearing the bridge, when Harve told Cotton Top to have the shot gun ready, "'cause they might a got wind of our coming this way, and have the bridge watched." Cotton Top rode a little in advance of Harve, and Zang a little in the rear, for Harve had the treasures. Their horses' hoofs made noise enough to arouse all the guards, had there been any, but none came into sight. When they had crossed the bridge, Cotton Top threw away the sawed off shot gun they had taken from the wrecked express car, saying:

"I don't guess we will have any more chance for pot-shots, and our rifles will be handier now."

When they had gone about three miles up Casper Creek, they stopped at an old cabin, and after watching for some time, decided they had not been followed from Casper and prepared to stay for the night taking turns at standing guard.

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At daybreak the next morning Cotton Top, who was taking his turn on guard, saw a man come up over the bank a little distance from the cabin. Seeing Cotton Top he called to him and asked him if those were horses over yonder, pointing to a few head of stock that were grazing on top of a knoll a little way off.

"Come and see for yourself," said Cotton Top. He had scarcely finished the sentence before Havre and Zang were in the doorway beside him, rifle in hand, cocked ready for any emergency. But they did not need them, at least for the time being, for the man quickly withdrew and disappeared.

"Get to your horses, fellers," said Harve. "That damn fool will go back to Casper and squeal, so the sooner we make ourselves scarce in this vicinity, the better for us. The telegraph wires will be busy this morning, and some people will be camping on our trail."

When they were nearing the head of Casper Creek a horseman was sighted in their rear. Zang looked through the glasses and recognized Skinney. Each one turned his horse facing the newcomer who dropped down as though picking up something from the ground, and after straightening up in his saddle, repeated the manoeuver. When he raised up the

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second time, Harve rode a little to one side and dismounted, and walking a few steps from his horse stood still, then came back and mounted. He had scarcely gotten into the saddle when the horseman started toward all of them, riding hard.

"Hello fellers!" he said, as he rode up. "How you comin'?"

"Safe so far, Skinney," answered Harve. "What's the latest in Casper?"

"When I found you wasn't comin' Salt Creek way I pulled into Casper to learn the news. I was at the Wyoming saloon holding a hand in a poker game when a feller said if they could locate your direction, a posse was going to start out after you to-day an' when I was eatin' my breakfast a big fat duffer come into the restaurant and said that damn freighter Hutspith came in town and give your trail away and the whole damnation town is comin' out to hunt you, an' the Union Pacific special car, special men, and special horses is comin' on a special train, and every county sheriff will likely come out, 'cause they have opened the big purse for two thousand on every one of your worthless scalps. So be makin' your getaway."

"How about fresh horses?"

"Never mind the horses; we'll get fresh ones at

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Billy Mountain's; but keep us posted if you can till we get a little nearer safe quarters."

"All right, Harve. So long."

The bandits had passed the Jumbo water holes and were getting into the Bad Lands when night began to settle and they found they had been seen. A few shots were fired on both sides but no one hurt, and darkness ended any further trouble till morning. When the first streaks of day appeared in the East, the robbers divided the contents of the bag and discarded what they did not want for they knew there was a possibility of their being obliged to split up. While they were still talking a horse looked up and nickered and they were forced to cover, leaving horses and saddles. Running, crawling and ducking, they managed to keep out of sight of their pursuers until finding a small blow-out surrounded by sage-brush and grease-wood; as they crawled into it they saw that their trailers had struck their tracks, and were making straight for their hiding place. Nearer and nearer they came until every word they uttered could be plainly distinguished, when suddenly they stopped and heard Joe Hazen, the daring sheriff of Converse County, say,

"Here boys, here they are," and coming toward them threw his gun to his shoulder, but before he

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could pull the trigger a rifle in the blow-out rang, and the sheriff fell, got up, ran a short distance, then fell again. For several hours they lay very quiet in the hole. Late in the afternoon Harve looked through the bushes and saw that several had joined the little band. Night found them stiff and hungry and ready to take desperate measures. When the night was a few hours old, they crept very quietly and cautiously to the edge of the wash-out then foot by foot till they came close to a picket. They could not tell if he was asleep or playing at it; at any rate he made no foolish move. After they passed the picket they made better progress and on reaching Castle Creek they took to the middle of the stream for nearly three miles; then made straight for Billy Mountain's, but before reaching there they passed a sheep wagon and could not resist the temptation of eating, for it had been many long hours since they had broken their fast.

Before leaving the sheep camp they muffled their feet with their coats, using half for each foot. On reaching the mountain place, they secured horses and went straight to the cabin from which Jack had been assisted by the mysterious woman, but before daylight, were again on their way to more secure quarters.

For thirty days sheriffs and their posses searched in vain for the bandits as that particular part of country held none who would assist a "law forcer."

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For several days they stayed in their hiding place, waiting for Skinney who would bring news from the outside world. They did not know how many, or how brave were their trailers, then the Union Pacific fellows might get excited and ask the gentlemen of leisure from the fort, out, but after a little game of dodge, Skinney arrived.

"Fellers, I reckon you had better leave this here section of country for a while. Things is gettin' sorter warmed, plum through the state." He then produced a paper and handing it to Harve he said: "Read that little piece about the robbery."

Harve opened the paper and the first thing that met his gaze in staring headlines in Billie Barlow's *Budget* was:

ROBBERY AND MURDER.

BOLD BANDITS FLAG AND ROB THE UNION PACIFIC FLYER. THREE OF THE THIEVES ARE FINALLY CORNERED NORTH OF CASPER. SHERIFF HAZEN, OF THIS COUNTY, MORTALLY WOUNDED IN A SKIRMISH WITH THE ROBBERS.

"Six masked men held up the Union Pacific last Friday morning at a side-track known as Wilcox, just west of the Rock

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Creek station, and cutting the express car off ran it ahead and rifled the safe, using dynamite with which to open it. The car was also badly wrecked. It is understood that the robbers secured something over \$100,000 in cash and jewelry, although the express officials report the loss as much less. A reward of \$2,000 per head is offered for the bandits, dead or alive. A special train passed west on Saturday afternoon bearing Jeff Carr and a posse of officers, who left the railroad at Casper and set out for the west, and on Sunday General Manager Dickinson and Division Superintendent Harris, of the Union Pacific, passed West in a private car and have been at Casper ever since directing the movements of the pursuing forces.

"Three of the robbers were tracked to a point on the old Rock Creek stage road lying about twenty miles south of Glenrock, and on Sunday morning the thieves were discovered about three miles from Casper. Meanwhile, two different parties of officers had arrived from the south, and these, together with those who had reached

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Caspar by rail, set out in pursuit of the robbers under the leadership of Sheriff Joe Hazen, of this County, who had volunteered his services and had joined the first party enroute to Casper. The bandits were sighted and shots exchanged Sunday afternoon, but without result other than the wounding of horses belonging to the officers. About 10 o'clock Monday morning the thieves were again located at a point about sixty miles north of Casper, and in a battle which ensued, Sheriff Hazen was shot through the body, the bullet entering the body just above the right groin and coming out at the back. It was six o'clock that evening before a wagon could be secured, and the wounded man was brought into Casper about 8 o'clock Tuesday morning and brought to Douglas by special train, Dr. Rorabaugh accompanying him. Drs. Wilson and Jesurum were called in, who pronounced his wound a very serious one, with slight hope of recovery. He sank rapidly, despite the efforts of his physicians and died at 5.30 that evening. The wound is a terrible one—

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the bullet with which it was inflicted having been of the 'soft-nosed' make, and tearing an awful hole in the back where it made its exit.

"Latest reports indicate the early capture of the robbers. They have abandoned their horses, which are now in the hands of the officers, and as the pursuing force numbers over fifty men, it is believed the thieves cannot get away. It is to be hoped that they will require coffins rather than handcuffs, when captured."

"So Joe died from the shot, eh Skinney?" said Zang as he reached for his gun and on it cut another notch.

"I think fellers, I shall join the moonshiners' order in the mountains of old Kentuck," said their leader after sitting for some time in a brown study. "What for you, Cotton Top?" asked Skinney.

"I am rather fascinated with the dangerous game of 'dodge' and I think I will play it a little longer," answered the man with the fuzzy white hair.

"I tell you feller citizens, I have resolved to join the range riders of Arizona, or the church, as I promised the little beauty on the JA6," said Zang.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOME AGAIN.

Many times Sunshine read the farewell note Jack had left her, and the more she thought about it the more she felt that if he loved her he would soon return. But days lengthened into weeks and she began to wish for home.

Mr. and Mrs. Leslie were most kind and considerate, but the desire to "chat with Daddy" about the troubles and joys of life, as they had often done before, grew on her, until she longed to turn her back on the prairie. She would go once more to the top of the great rock wall where Jack had so nearly given up his life for her, and decide what was best to do. She did not tell Mrs. Leslie where she was going, only that she wished to take a ride.

The voices of the prairie called to her as her horse jogged along the south trail, and on reaching the top of a knoll about a mile from the ranch, she stopped

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her horse, as had been her custom, to look at the wild, beautiful scene before her.

The Buck Creek hills crowned with green, stately pines,—old Tim Butte like a spectral ghost, in its chalky whiteness, looming against a background of blue sky,—and between them the endless stretches of green prairie.

She had never descended from this little elevation without stopping to gaze at the typical bit of Wyoming scenery, but to-day it looked wild and lonely. When she neared the edge of the precipice, she dismounted, and throwing the reins over the horse's head that he might nibble the fresh spring grass, she lay on the ground in the warm sun to think over the many things that had transpired since she knelt on that same spot and held Jack's head in her arms, begging him to "speak to her."

She watched the flitting clouds as they came and went. Each one looked more billowy than the others. Some seemed to barely escape the tops of the straggling cotton-wood trees along the dry creek on the lowlands, while others looking much larger and heavier, would soar far above the pines on the highest point of the Buck Creek hills. Then came one—large and white and beautiful, just like the one that had held the picture of the future ranch home Jack

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had tried to show her. He had described it to her too—a log house, a rustic porch and some clinging vines—a girl coming to meet him, and happiness—oh such happiness! But what did *that* mean? For as she looked, a great black cloud floated into view and completely covered the white one. She caught her breath, and shading her eyes with her hand, looked long and earnestly; it had made the fleecy one invisible.

She was of a somewhat superstitious nature, and pressing her hands to her eyes choked back a sob. She would go home—home! And mounting her horse, she started for the Leslie's fully determined to leave for her city as soon as it would be feasible.

* * * *

Never had home looked so cheerful and inviting. Her father met her at the station, and after kissing her, held her off at arm's length and looked steadily into her eyes. It was good to have a father—and such a father! And it was good to be *home*! The change from the quiet, dreamy life of the prairie to the bustle and turmoil of the city, the little duties and cares which she had taken up once more, and above all the quiet sympathy of "Daddy," were beginning to dull the sharp edge of her sorrow.

As the weeks rolled by, she took more interest in

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the wonderful works of man just as she had marveled and admired the unsurpassable creations of Nature in the untamed West.

Her father noticed the change in her. She had left him a frolicking, light-hearted girl—happy, laughing, merry “Sunshine.” He had given her that name because to him it seemed the most appropriate one for her. He loved his other children, but she had crept a little closer to his heart—she loved everything that he loved, so they had many things in common, and perhaps, too, it was because she was so like her mother to whom he was devoted. She was no longer the little girl who had longed to go back to the prairie—she was a woman, sweet and cheerful as ever, but wiser and more thoughtful.

The occasional letters from the West gave her no information as to Jack’s whereabouts. The Leslies were going to New York for the Winter, and the paper had given an account of the marriage of Tracy Petz but not a word about Jack, from anywhere. She was wondering about it when her father came home, accompanied by a tall handsome stranger, whom he introduced as Mr. Gould. After a few commonplace remarks she left them to retire to her room and read the evening papers as was her custom.

She sat before the window looking out over the

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great spreading trees, preparing for whatever news the papers might contain for her. Among them was one from the West, and slowly opening it, she read in the locals :

"Jack Randolph, formerly the trusty foreman of the JA6, has purchased a half interest in the OIO ranch. This is one of the largest ranches in this part of the country. Mr. Randolph will be manager—success to you, Jack!"

To Sunshine "Jack" was Mr. Randolph now; she felt as she had never felt before. Perhaps it was best. They were not for each other, and quietly folding the paper, she went down to join her father and his guest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TRAILING THE HORSETHIEF.

"Is he dead?" asked Peddy, speaking to no one in particular, and leaning over the man on the bed in the bunk-house. They had just poured some whiskey down his throat, and his eyelids trembled and fluttered a little, then he opened them and asked three questions in one breath; it was really the first breath he had taken as far as the others could see, for nearly half an hour.

"Who am I? Where am I, and what am I doing?"

Before any one could answer the man on the bed sat looking around and licking his lips.

"What in hell am I doing here? I smell something, fellers," he said.

"Just you lay down and I will answer a few of your questions," said Peddy. "First you are Buck Saffell, broncho buster an' tough man. Second: You are in the bunk house on the JA6 ranch. Third: You are laying on a bed where we put you for dead. And

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fourth and last : We brought you in here after you had been kicked by a horse. He lammed you right over the heart and knocked you out."

"What was that 'er truck you give me?"

"Why it was a little whiskey."

"You got any more, Peddy?"

"Yes, about a pint."

"Then please, fellers, take me out an' let him kick me again."

Peddy laughed and poured him out a liberal drink in a tin cup.

"Here's to your little school marm!"

"She ain't mine yet, Buck."

"Give me another swig to your luck a winnin' her, Boss."

"Not now, Buck."

"All right, but say, did you all find them saddle horses?"

"No! We have hunted every place there would be any chance for them to run, but can find no trace of them."

"Then I think you better go to Casper and find out if there wan't any JA6 horses in them they took from Tom when they pulled him."

"Has that whiskey crazed you?"

"Naw! two little stingy smells at that dam'd stingy

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bottle, hasn't crazed me. No such a damn thing. I am talking sense. You fellows must a come just as I got kicked?"

"Yes. We rode up from the Creek just as you fell."

"Why I was waitin' all mornin' for you fellers to come back,—I wanted to tell you 'bout it—that's how I come to be foolin' away time monkeyin' with that 'er broncho."

"Well, now that we are here, tell us about it," said Peddy, "and shut up your rattlin' an' talk business."

"You go to hell!"

"I'll go anywhere, if you'll get a hurry started and tell us about Tom."

"Well fellers, it's this way. Old Maggots, an' old sheep herder over on the divide, says to me as I rode up: 'Say! ain't you one of the JA6 men?' 'Yep,' says I. 'Didn't they have a rider or bronch twister by the name of Tom O'Day?' 'Yep!' says I. 'Well he's got hisself in trouble.'

"'What kind o' trouble, ol' carcus worm?' says I. 'Horse stealin',' says he.

"'How did you decide that?' says I.

"'A feller from Hat Creek come along here yesterday, an' he had some bran' new newspapers, an' while he was eatin' his dinner I cooked for him, he let me read 'em, an' it told about it in there how a Casper sheriff caught him.'

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"I always did know Tom had a weakness that way ever since a sheep-man at Casper told me he bought a horse from him, and when he asked him for a bill of sale, he said: 'Aw man; what are you talkin' about? I hain't got no bill of sale. I stole that horse in North Dakota a long time ago for a pack horse. I was short a horse an' they was rather plenty up there, so I helped myself, an' if anybody wants to know where you got him, tell 'em he is one of Tom O'Day's raisin'.'"

"How about the mail?" asked Peddy. "Isn't it tomorrow Brownie was to be back from town?"

"Yep!"

"Then if this story about Tom being in trouble is true, we shall see something about it in the papers."

Brownie did not reach the ranch till late, and before he had his horse unhitched he went to the house to tell Mr. Leslie he had heard Tom had got into trouble and was in jail at Casper. Mr. Leslie took a fresh horse and went to town. There he found that the reports were too true. A man by the name of Johnson had missed some horses and someone had whispered it was the work of Tom O'Day. So the big warrant was sworn out and given to the Casper sheriff who with many a long drawn sigh and much misgiving, started after the happy-go-lucky, cool Tom.

About 45 miles from Casper, the sheriff found what

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he was sure was the trail of Tom and the stolen horses. It was the 18th of November. On the following day he caught sight of Tom in the distance. Now he felt he must do double watching. He must keep Tom in sight, but must keep out of sight of Tom, for he knew his chance would be slim in an even break. If he would capture, and not be captured, he must play a cinch game. For the man he trailed had nerves like steel. On and on went the wearisome trail, while colder grew the weather. In the daytime it was a long, weary wait, while night found Tom, horses, and the man hunter again on the long dim path leading to the mountains. Then when daylight came the horses were allowed to rest and pick through the snow for a little feed till darkness made it safer for traveling.

On and on again they went, one hiding from the outside world that does not consider the fearful temptations the open ranges of the great grazing country in the middle West hold forth, the other hiding from the one who had given in to temptation and now sought the luring trails of the mountains where he could hide the stolen horses until they could be turned into cash. For it takes cash to be a "sport" a "good fellow" even in the little towns on the great plains far away from the footlights. Many times, thousands

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have been thrown away on the gambling tables, and in dance halls, by a good mother's wayward son, and without a sigh of regret, for had he not his pony staked just outside the town, and a ring in his pocket, that would put its brand on some of the thousands of stock on the range when heated in a little sage brush fire? Then there was the trail into the mountains and through the mountains into other states, and even Canada, where they could be sold for cash.

Here was the same old story. Sister, mother, all that was best and good, forgotten in sight of the beckoning hand that points to wealth and comfort just at the other end of the path of danger.

The stars were peeping through the dark, swiftly floating clouds when Tom left his horses and went into a cabin, after tying his saddle horse in a small corral without removing saddle or bridle. Soon a light was seen through the window and the man trailer crept closer till he could watch if Tom would come out to drive the horses still further, but he did not leave the cabin till morning. Then he came out and walked toward the corral.

"Throw up your hands!" called a voice just a few feet away.

Tom started for his guns with both hands.

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"Throw up your hands, and damn quick!" yelled the voice again, and this time Tom obeyed.

The sheriff had brought his deputy with him for he could not have thought of trailing O'Day alone into a country where an officer is friendless.

"Take his guns!" the man trailer told his helper, and Tom was obliged to part with his best friends although they were useless to him in this case.

That day they went to Deranch and stayed over night; the sheriff sent a man with the stolen horses to Lost Cabin where they were again stolen by those who were no friend to a sheriff. Later nineteen head were recovered but the rest of the bunch were never seen.

The second day was one that would long be remembered by Tom and his captor. The sheriff would not take the through trail to Casper as he feared Tom's friends would relieve him of his prisoner, so he took him through the pathless wastes of the Bad Lands. Their suffering was intense as was that of their poor, hard ridden horses, stumbling and slipping in the deep snow for the seventy-five miles to Johnson's ranch on Casper Creek—then the next day into Casper.

A few days after the trial of the horse thief began, the sheriff was taking his prisoner to the court room and two or three feet in front of them a wealthy stock-

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man was giving his companion his opinion without looking to see who might overhear him.

"It is an outrage to our state the way this trial is being conducted. Why soon we won't be able to have any stock on the open range at all. These low-down thieves are stealing us blind. They should make an example of one of them and hang him to the nearest tree. I would be in favor of taking the law in our own hands and—"

"And if they had done that thing, Mr. Rich-man," interrupted a low voice beside him, "your damned carcass would have fed the buzzards several years ago. I hain't always lived in the Big Horn mountains, an' I know a big outfit that would had more beef to turn off if the thieves in their outfit had been strung up to a tree just like you said. Justice should only be dealt out by a man that is clean, not dirty scums of the earth like a man I know who use to boss a outfit, between here an' the Canada line. Don't you come into no court room to taunt me with your rich clothes an' your cowardly eye, 'cause I got a few friends left in this here vicinity even if my hands are useless," and with white face and set teeth, he stepped up to where the others stood not caring to listen to a conversation that was not meant for them.

"I am ready to go on now," said Tom. But the

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man he had formerly addressed suddenly felt ill, and the next day could not be found. Since then, Casper has apparently lost all attractions for a wealthy man like him.

A whole month the trial dragged, when finally a third Jury convicted Tom O'Day, the horse-thief of the Hole-in-the-Wall—and the judge gave him six years in the state penitentiary. Six years is a long time to a man who has lived much in the open air, and a six by eight foot cell a cramped abiding place when one has covered miles in his daily exercise. But men of that stamp do not complain, they play a big game and if they lose they bear it in silence.

CHAPTER XXV.

TWO CONFESSIONS.

Jack, groaning in his misery of mind and body, did not hear the robbers when they left for their retreat, consequently, when he heard someone coming into the dugout, he quickly covered the entrance with his gun, but as quickly lowered it, for the intruder was his erstwhile friend, and not seeming to notice the gun she handed him a cup of cold water.

"I see you have suffered much," she said. "I wish you would try to walk to the cabin; I will assist you; this place is terrible."

"Is it any more terrible for me than it is for you?" Jack asked, pointing to the crude toilet articles on the box.

"I am well,—you are far from it, and I am afraid never will be, without the aid of a physician."

"Have they gone far?"

"They will not return. I will go to town and telegraph for Dr. Foureyes."

"Do you know that he will come out here now?"

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"Yes—only the world must not know. It would not do for him to let his patients hear he came even as a physician, to men such as live in the Hole-in-the-Wall."

When she had finished speaking, for some reason which he did not understand at the time, her dark eyes seemed to almost penetrate his, and turning suddenly on her heel, she left him.

He could not help but realize she had placed her own life in jeopardy to save him! He was not left with his thoughts very long for in a little while she was again at his side.

"Come," she said, "I have made things as comfortable as possible for you, so you can manage till I return with the Doctor."

She did not look at him this time, fearing she could not hide that which her pride forbade his knowing.

"Probably you will blame me, but I felt I must know, even if I was powerless to act, so I crawled down there before, (pointing to the cabin) and through a hole I made in the dobbing, I saw the face of the leader."

"I guessed something of that sort. You could not see the others?"

"No. But the voice of one is very familiar to me; he is my worst enemy, and once would have killed me,

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had not a girl interposed; she loved my pal, and they were engaged, but he's gone over the Divide; he was killed in a stampede. He was a fine fellow!" reminiscently.

When he had finished, he stood up and started for the cabin. With every step he clenched his hands tighter, and his mouth became firmer. As the woman saw this her face grew white and tense.

Entering the cabin, she motioned to him to lie down; he did so, closing his eyes, while his chest rose and fell like a great bellows, caused by the suffering he was enduring. From a little shelf she took a box containing some tiny pills, and giving him two, said:

"They will not hurt you, only make you a little more quiet. I took one last night so I could face those men."

As she looked at him, her eyes were lustrous, and her lips parted, showing a set of perfect white teeth, while she leaned far forward, eagerly listening for one word—something that would mean a little more than friendship or mere gratitude, for this man whom she had nursed and held back from the grave by her cunning and bravery, had already begun to fill a void in her life which for many a long day had been necessarily present.

"I think it's time you knew something of me," he

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said. "My name is Jack Randolph. Before I came to these parts, I was the Foreman of the JA6. I left there because I loved a girl—the first one in my life," and with a faraway expression, he told her what had passed between himself and Sunshine. When he had finished, she turned to him naively:

"It seems as though a great love should be the most vital thing in our lives—whether it be that of an honest man, a mother's, father's or any kind whatsoever. You see I have no mother or father, but am an orphan. My name is Vivian Rutherford. My father, a civil engineer, was killed in an accident when I was an infant; he was of English and German parentage, and my mother was a Spanish American. They were very happy; so happy that her grief for him killed her, leaving me alone in the world. An old schoolmate of my mothers adopted me and brought me safely to womanhood. Worry for her only son, a wayward, restless, intemperate fellow, was the cause of her having consumption, and I buried my second mother. My foster father, a wealthy manufacturer, died while I was in school, disinheriting and disowning his son.

"When I learned that the boy was cut off without a dollar, and that I was to get everything at the death of my foster mother, I was very angry, but gained the consent of the mother to deed all to him, when I



"You must leave here or I shall not go," said Jack.

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should come into possession of the estate. Before she passed away I promised her to spend ten years of my life trying to find and reform him. I have spent two years of that time already, and have done nothing. For eighteen months I searched, and for six I have begged and pleaded, but with no result. You wonder why I stay here among so much crime and misery! I will tell you:

"I supplanted him in his father's affections. I did not realize it till it was too late. I cannot make up that irreparable loss, but I will keep my promise to his dead mother. I will stay and do my best."

"He was not with them last night?" asked Jack.

"No; but he is likely scouting for them."

"And they—what do they think about it?"

"Harve advised him to leave and go back to the old home with me and 'live straight.'"

"No—they never leave it till it is too late. It was he who shot Prince?"

"Yes. It was Skinney. That is what *they* call him. I can not bear to hear his real name here, so I have learned to call him that too."

They had been silent for some time, when Jack suddenly looked up and said peremptorily:

"You must leave here or I shall not go."

"What possible difference can it make to you? Go

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back to the girl you love and forget that I am here," she said, somewhat bitterly.

"I did love her—I cannot deny that, nor do I wish to, but, Miss Rutherford, I am a man and only human, you know. She has what you have lost—loving parents, a home—"

"And your love, which is more than all," she interrupted.

"Perhaps not to her. I feel pretty sure of that now." Then suddenly, "I will not leave this country till you give up this impossible task. I know a man who makes his home in these parts. I did him a friendly turn once. Through him I will try and keep track of your foster brother and should he need help I will do what I can honorably do, for him. You must go back to your home and be as happy as you can—should anything happen where you could do any good for Skinney, I will let you know."

For a few minutes she sat motionless with her great eyes looking into his face, then answered:

"I will only go when you are in a condition to be left."

CHAPTER XXVI.

TO THE EAST COAST.

Several years have passed since the judge sentenced Tom to six years in the penitentiary. Through good behavior his sentence was shortened and he is again a happy man, glad to live in the freedom of the mountains and plains of what he calls "God's Country."

The trail of the iron horse has made many changes in the land of the cowboy and the outlaw, the gambler and the cattle king. In the mountains where none but the outlaw and the wholesale rustler knew the trail that wound through silent grandeur from Canada to Old Mexico, the timid settler is making his way. Small ranches dot here and there the foothills where but a few short years ago not a habitation existed. Harve and his gang not caring for neighbors, left the Hole-in-the-Wall and sought better ground for their midnight escapades. The Northern Pacific in Montana is thought to have been obliged to contribute a little of its wealth to the cool, daring Harve, who

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could sit and roll his cigarette with handcuffs on, with as much unconcern as on the mountain where he taught his men to act quick and keep cool by placing dummies outside the cabin, and at a given signal run out shooting the dummies as they made a dash for their horses which were kept handy in case of a surprise by some sheriff who was hunting glory and usually got it in an epitaph on his headstone, or if too poor for that, in a little item of his town paper; for the man who catches Harve Slogan must be prepared to hunt big game. They caught him once, and tried him, and gave him a sentence he objected to, so he "cut it" and sailed across the big pond. Of his pals who helped him secure the treasures of the Union Pacific, one served time, one cracked bank safes for a living till a bullet from the rifle of a sheriff caused another grave to be filled and marked unknown but one man, who gazed long at the thin face of the outlaw in the rough pine box, went to the little railroad station and sent the following message to Jack Randolph, at Lusk:

"We planted your trouble to-day. I did what I could but it was no use."

Zang ran from a man with a star under his coat but the man with the star had a good horse and Zang pulled his gun but too late; a bullet came singing a

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song of death and he closed his black, daring eyes. Then papers told the people Zang Thompson had been killed for resisting arrest in Arizona. Of the others in different states and at different times and for different crimes they have been corralled. On the JA6 the horses are being gathered for another round-up and as they are driven into the corral, men come trooping out from bunk house and barn, but they are all strangers. Only one familiar voice is heard in the corral among the snorting, fighting bronchs—good-hearted, cigarette-puffing Buck, who has his string caught and before the others have succeeded in snubbing their first, is fanning a wiry wild-eyed cayuse on the open flat.

Jack, in the new capacity of "Boss" of the OIO, was giving directions to his "reps" as to the "working" of the various round-ups, also the branding of calves, etc., before going to town to purchase his spring supplies and get the mail. As he neared the village, some one riding like a jockey, on a racy-looking bay horse, waved a whip then slowed up to allow Jack to overtake him—he recognized Brownie.

"How's his 'disposition'?" he asked the jolly, brown-eyed boy.

"Couldn't be better, Jack, an' I'm tryin' to keep it

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good till the races at 'Frontier.' Are you goin' to be in town to-night?"

"Yes, why?"

"The young Boss is going' to get spliced to his little school teacher, and he thinks it's on the quiet."

"What are you telling me? Is *Peddy* going to be married this evening?"

"Yes, an' we are goin' to ring a few bells an' pound a few pans to let him know he's got *some* acquaintances left in this here vicinity."

"All right, Brownie; count on me. Are any of the old bunch here?"

"No—they're mostly scattered. Slim, the cook, he's a fixture, an' Tuberculer, he's gone back to his dear East to cough up the rest of his lungs. Buck will be in charge soon's he gets back, 'til *Peddy* gets home from his honeymoon."

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Scarcely had the words that made Olive Roy and Alfred Leslie man and wife, been spoken by the minister, when a terrible din was heard outside, and it did not diminish in the least till the smiling bridegroom came and told them to get whatever they wanted "on him." While the boys were getting hilarious at *Peddy's* expense, Jack slipped away to the little hotel to read his mail.

TO THE EAST COAST.

The first letter that he opened was written in a childish, scrawling hand, and as he read he smiled:

"I don't like it here, Jack. I have to ride on the street cars and I'd rather ride a horse. There is more children here than there is Jack-rabbits there. Mamma used to tell me of the great things in the big cities and I thought I would like so much to see them, but every time you go to see anything great, the people bunch up like a lot of stampeded 'dogies' an' you can't breathe an' you wish you had a few tons of Wyoming air. Jack, when I am a man, I am goin' to live out West on a big ranche like you an' Uncle Peddy."

"Poor little kid, he done that writin' pretty good. He writes that Charles Leslie, Jr., just like *I* showed him. I suppose he is pretty homesick. I don't think you will always ride on street cars or in the crowded city, little feller, 'cause your father was born an' raised on the plains an' in the little western village, an' I don't think he'll be caught dying back there in the city, unless he's called in mighty soon."

From his pocket he took another letter—a dainty, lavender-tinted affair. He did not tear the envelope as he had done the other, but taking his pocket knife, cut it open very carefully at the end. This was the first letter he had received from Vivian since he had

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sent her a paper announcing the engagement of Miss Sunshine Golden to Mr. Ralph Gould, and he knew that she would feel more at liberty to open her mind to him now that Sunshine was plighted to another.

He wanted to read the letter without any possible chance of being disturbed, so locked the door.

"My dear Jack:

"I cannot tell you what a comfort your letter was to me. I have been very much disturbed of late on account of a threatened strike at the woolen mill which belongs to the estate left me by my foster-father. There has been much dissatisfaction among the employes for some months and I have received several threatening letters and am very uneasy. For some reason, I would feel at liberty to ask your advice if I saw things coming to the worst—a strike—I know you would understand the situation much better than I. I do not trust my superintendent and cannot believe but that he is the cause of all the unrest.

"Please let me hear from you, and if things grow worse, will wire.

"Sincerely,

"Vivian Rutherford."

Graycrest—Tuesday.

L.——— Mass.

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For some time he sat in disturbed thought, then suddenly realized that valuable time was flying. Tilt-
ing his hat a little rakishly to one side, he muttered:
"Me for the east coast!"

It was a good while before he found the ranchman that had come in to take out the four-horse load of supplies. After a long search he found him in the hay-loft of the livery stable, somewhat the worse for the shiverree.

"Slivers!" he called. "Slivers! Wake up and get yourself together. I'm agoin' away on the train in the morning an' I want to talk to you." Slivers only rolled over and snored a little louder.

"Slivers, you drunken idiot, come out of it! I want to start for the east coast to-morrow an' I must talk to you."

Slivers wasn't too drunk to understand the words "east coast" spoken in too earnest a tone to sound like a jest, and immediately sat up rubbing his eyes.

"What in h-ll you goin' do down east coast, Boss?"

"I have some business down there, Slivers."

"How long will you be gone, Boss?"

"I can't say—but will depend on you keeping me posted about the ranch and I want you to get the wagon loaded early so I can get through here and leave on the east bound train."

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"I'll do the best I can, but I ain't much on 'pen-pushin'."

"I'll make it out all right; now there's something I want to tell you. I have always felt I could bank on you an' I may need you, so if I send you a hurry-up call, don't stand round some city readin' signs—hit the trail an' hit her hard—don't let the grass grow over your spurs, an' don't stop for the price of a few 'dogies' but point your nose due east an' sift. I may not need you but am givin' these pointers in case I do. Now don't drink another drop; keep on your feet an' keep your head up. You better go to the hotel and get a bed."

"I don't want no bed—I rather sleep here with the bronchs—but what's the nature of the disturbance you're lookin' for, Boss?"

"A strike in a woolen mill."

"How in the mischief did you get mixed in any wollen-mill deal?"

"The owner is a friend of mine and I must see her through it."

"Oh, it's a *her*, eh? All right Boss. I'm yours for trouble; my Ireland blood yearns for it."

"Now Slivers, are you sober enough to remember what I've told you?"

"Every word, Boss, even the *her*."

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"All right then; I'll go to bed. One thing more: don't drink a drop till you hear from me, do you hear?"

"I'm weaned till you're back in the saddle, Mr. Randolph."

They shook hands, and "the Boss" went back to his hotel feeling much easier, for he knew that dearly as Slivers loved his "rye juice" he would keep his word.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

The manufacturing city of L——— was wrapped in sleep when the train that brought Jack pulled in to the station. He took a cab to a nearby hotel, and being a little hungry inquired if he could procure something to eat. A porter directed him to the café, and the tired traveler after giving his order, sat back in the comfortable upholstered chair to wait for the food to be brought in.

The tables were in little booths or stalls, and he heard two men talking in the one next his. One voice was quiet and smooth, the other coarse and rasping.

The waiter came in, and after placing everything conveniently on the table, was told to retire.

Jack had eaten his light meal and was getting ready to enjoy a smoke when he heard the man with the rough voice in the next booth repeat the name of Rutherford. The match he held burned down to his fingers without his knowing it, and went out, but still he held it up to the cigar just where it had been when he heard the name of the woman he had come to help.

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The shoving back of chairs warned him the occupants were leaving. He turned his back toward the entrance in case they should look that way and see his face—he did not know why, but he did not want this to happen.

When he was sure they were gone, he rang for the waiter, and slipping a crisp bill into his hand, asked if he knew the parties who had just left the booth next to his. On being told that one was Mr. Garrett, Superintendent of the woolen mills now owned by Miss Rutherford, he asked:

“Did you ever see the other before?”

“No sir.”

“May I step into the next booth a minute?”

“As long as you like, sir.”

One side of the table showed remnants of a sumptuous meal, and on the other, a plate of cakes and a small bottle of wine from which scarcely any had been taken. A strong odor of whiskey permeated the atmosphere.

He felt that Fate or Providence must be guiding his steps, and this occurrence might prove of some value later, for he did not like the tone of the coarse voice, and the conversation had not been favorable to Miss Rutherford.

On leaving the café and retiring to his room, he turned out the light, when a rap sounded on his door.

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Opening it, he saw the waiter he had tipped so generously, standing before him, with a small bunch of crumpled paper in his hand.

"I found this under the table where the rough guy sat."

The paper was written in a scrawling fashion that showed unmistakable evidence of being disguised.

"Meet me at the entrance of the C—— Hotel and I will tell you my plans—everything must be in readiness by Friday, for she has telegraphed a fellow out West to come here; we don't know anything about him and she must think he can help her, or she would not wire him. She sent the message this morning and that will give us time to act before he gets here."

There was no signature but Jack knew who must have written it.

"Well you are a little too late, pard—I'm on the ground," and going to the telephone he asked Central to give him the telegraph office, and sent the following:

"Slivers—OIO bar Ranch, Lusk, Wyo.

"Come, and come quick; wire when you start and I will meet you in B.

Jack R.

"Delivery charges guaranteed."

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He scarcely knew what to do; if he saw Vivian he would be at a disadvantage for he wanted to go to the mill and find out himself what was the cause of the trouble.

As soon as the shops were open in the morning, he got his friend, the waiter, to get him a suit of working clothes such as the hands in the mills wore, and attired in them, he applied for a position.

Fortune smiled on him, and he secured a place as porter for the offices. He was to keep them clean and answer the door, and should visitors come, it would be his duty to show them over the mill.

He had scarcely become established in his new quarters when he was brought face to face with the owner of the repulsive voice, and as he now saw, more repulsive face. He asked for the Superintendent. Jack ushered him into the office and watched the face of Mr. Garrett closely when he announced the caller who had given the name of Andrew Clark. The Superintendent dismissed Jack and told him to see that no one disturbed them.

"No one shall disturb you, 'sup," he said to himself, "'cause I'm goin' to hear this conversation," and with that, stepped quietly into a cupboard in the wall of the outer office.

Only a thin partition kept out the sound from the

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private office and the conversation he so much wished to hear. He shut the door of the cupboard to deaden the noise from the outside, and pressed his ear hard against the thin boards.

A slight sound at his side caused him to turn quickly, and to his horror he saw in the fast darkening room, another form get into the cupboard quietly, and shut itself in. He knew he must prevent an outcry in case this occupant should discover his presence. Slowly and breathlessly he drew his gun from a scabbard inside the bosom of his shirt. Reaching forward with his gun he touched the man, and whispered:

"Not a sound or there'll be trouble—what are you doing here?"

"What are *you* doing here?" whispered the strange voice.

"I'm here to look out for the interests of a friend—she's in trouble," Jack said, not realizing he had used a give-away pronoun.

"As long as it's a '*she*' you can mean no one else but Miss Rutherford, so I can safely tell you I'm here for the same purpose—let's shake," and after jiu jitsuing around in the semi-darkness for each other's hand, Jack, in a much relieved tone, said:

"Then we're friends."

The men in the office talked louder now and they could easily catch the drift of the conversation.

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"Get the men to walk out Friday and tell them to ask for a twenty per cent raise, and I will get her to refuse, and then discouraged and before we get through with her she will be glad to sell for any price we want to offer."

The rest of the conversation they could not hear, but they had heard enough. Noiselessly, the two left the cupboard and the outer office.

"Who are you?" Jack asked the other.

"An engineer of the mill. And you?"

"An old friend of Miss Rutherford's."

"Then you're not a detective?"

"No."

"Miss Rutherford is a good woman, but the 'sup' is a heartless brute. She is good to the people here, but he lies to them about her. Come with me till they leave the mill and I will show you something."

He led Jack through large rooms and down many steps to the engine room where he secured a lantern, but did not light it until they were in a small dark passage. At the end of this he reached back under some protruding blocks of cement and pulled out a box; lifting the lantern so the light would flash on it, he raised the lid. Jack was fairly staggered at the sight—it was filled with bright yellow gold coins.

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"This is what is causing the trouble; he is stealing it from the men, and they think they are poorly paid. I would have told her, but *she* would not believe it and if I told *them*, he would say *I* had stolen it."

On Friday morning Jack got the engineer to write a note to Miss Rutherford asking her to come to the mill at two o'clock as it was vitally important. And leaving it to him to pass the word to the heads of each department that the wage question would be settled satisfactorily to the employes, he went to B..... to meet Slivers.

When the word had been passed and just as the clock in the mill struck two, the employes started leaving—Garret and his *friend* Clark supposed, to strike.

Miss Rutherford's carriage drove up to the steps and as she got out, Jack and Slivers came from the mill, and the former stepping forward, assisted her up the steps, and told her in an undertone not to say anything now, but to do as he asked; going a little to the front of the platform, he said:

"People of the mill: You have been called out to *strike* because your wages were not what they should be; you work hard and your families' needs demand that you ask for better wages; it is only right and just that you should get them."

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Garrett and Clark looked at each other with satisfaction, for they did not recognize the *porter* but thought this strange westerner was really in sympathy with the strikers.

"I am positive Miss Rutherford desires you should get the wages you deserve, and you shall have them. What wages are they getting?"

Garrett started forward, talking quickly and loudly:

"Miss Rutherford should be spared such scenes as this. She knows nothing of the business affairs of the mill."

"Stand back where you are, Garrett," demanded Jack, drawing his big Colts gun.

"Now, Miss Rutherford, proceed."

"The men receive fifteen dollars and the women ten dollars."

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" came from a hundred throats.

Vivian looked from the crowd to Jack then to Garrett who with his companion was edging toward the gates.

"Stop!" sang out Slivers. "Stop where you are; this thing goes off some times an' it's dangerous," leveling his gun at the pair.

Two men stepped out of the mill, carrying a heavy box; as they came in view a cry escaped from Garrett the "Superintendent thief."

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"Here are your wages, men; they have been *saved* for you?" (with a questioning raise of the voice) "by Mr. Garrett," pointing to the crouching figure beside Clark.

Cries of joy were mingled with curses as the box was carried back out of sight by the two who had carried it to the platform.

Jack held up his hand and the noise ceased immediately.

"I wish to say for Miss Rutherford that you will get what rightly belongs to you as soon as we can find that out from the pay roll. Now if you will trust Miss Rutherford and myself, I promise we will see that you will get what is right," and handing Vivian into her carriage, he commissioned Slivers to be sure she reached her home safely, where he would join them as soon as he had seen that Garrett was "taken care of."

A few hours later Jack Randolph found himself ringing timidly at the door of Vivian's home. When he entered, she held out her hands, shyly:

"Jack!" was all she could say.

He saw a strange, yet familiar light in her eyes, and closing the door, they entered a new—no—ever old garden of dreams, where the world, with its trials and difficulties, was soon forgotten.



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